

Additional Assessment
African Studies

**Faculty of Humanities,
Leiden University**

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This report was finalised on 9 February 2016.

Report on the master's programme African Studies of Leiden University

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments (22 November 2011) as a starting point.

Administrative data regarding the programme

Master's programme African Studies

Name of the programme:	African Studies
CROHO number:	60837
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Location(s):	Leiden
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Expiration of accreditation:	30-10-2016

The visit of the assessment panel of the master's programme African Studies to the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University took place on 4 December 2015.

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 panel which assessed the master's programme African Studies consisted of:

- Prof. Alfons Wouters (chair), Professor emeritus of Greek Language and Literature at KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. Giorgio Banti, Professor of Linguistics and Vice Dean of Oriental University Naples (Italy);
- Magalie Kisukurume BA, master's student in African Studies at Ghent University (Belgium).

The panel was supported by dr. Fiona Schouten, who acted as secretary under supervision of dr. Barbara van Balen.

The Board of Leiden University and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) approved the composition of the panel. Appendix 1 contains the curricula vitae of the members of the panel. All panel members and the project manager signed a declaration of independence as required by the NVAO protocol to ensure that they judge

without bias, personal preference or personal interest, and the judgement is made without undue influence from the institute, the programme or other stakeholders.

Reasons and context

The master's programme African Studies of Leiden University was assessed on 27-29 May 2013 as a part of a Regional Studies assessment, which judged 10 bachelor's and 8 master's programmes at that university's Faculty of Humanities. The assessment panel finalised its report on 1 April 2014. In the report, which is based on the NVAO Assessment Framework (22 November 2011), the panel assessed Standards 2 (Teaching-learning environment) and 3 (Assessment and achieved learning outcomes) as 'unsatisfactory'. Consequently, in accordance with the framework's decision rules, the programme as a whole was assessed as 'unsatisfactory'.

The panel based its assessment of Standard 2 on the fact that the curriculum of the programme had not been designed according to the intended learning outcomes. The panel pointed out that the intended learning outcomes required the students to be trained in a wide range of disciplines and the research methods used in these disciplines. However, the curriculum mainly offered training in history and literature, whereas cultural anthropology, development economics and sociology were underrepresented in the eyes of the panel.

In its discussion of Standard 2, the panel also expressed concern about the programme's identity vis-à-vis the African Studies research master, the programme's dangerously low number of students, the lack of communication between staff members and students and staff, the mentoring of students, and the passive role of the Teaching Committee. It also considered students' preparation for the non-academic working field to be insufficient. The panel formulated recommendations on all these aspects.

The panel assessed Standard 3 as 'unsatisfactory' due to the fact that the master's theses frequently contained only one research method, whereas the intended learning outcomes specified knowledge about and insight into various disciplines, including the social sciences. The panel concluded that the achieved outcomes did not demonstrate beyond doubt that all graduates had actually achieved knowledge of various disciplines.

The panel also found improvement of the assessment system through formalization and a clear definition of the Board of Examiners' position and role to be necessary. Furthermore, it considered assessment procedures, particularly concerning thesis and internship, insufficiently transparent.

In June 2014, the programme sent the panel a document in which it described the measures it had taken and intended to take based on the panel's report and recommendations. The panel responded to this document, recommending the NVAO to allow the programme to execute its improvement plan. On 31 October 2014, the NVAO decided to grant the programme an improvement period of two years and to extend the accreditation of the master's programme in African Studies to 30 October 2016.

The programme's improvement plan concerned the following points:

- The profile of the programme (S1);
- Curriculum, learning tracks and interdisciplinarity (S2);
- Preparation for the job market (S2);

- Procedure and functioning of the Teaching Committee (S2);
- Student intake (S2);
- Mentoring (S2);
- Communication (S2);
- Internship and thesis regulations (S3);
- Assessment and achieved learning outcomes (S3).

Following the NVAO guideline on points of departure for the assessment of programmes granted an improvement period, Standard 1, which was assessed as ‘satisfactory’, is not a part of this reassessment. Nevertheless, the improvement plan of the programme included a re-orientation of the programme’s profile. The panel did not judge this in the context of the reassessment, but it did discuss the measure.

Working method of the assessment panel

Preparation

In order to prepare for the additional assessment, the Faculty of Humanities provided the secretary with a progress report. The secretary sent this report to the panel after checking it for completeness of information. The programme also provided six theses which it considered most representative of its improvement. With the exception of the student member, the panel members studied these and the accompanying assessment form.

Site visit

At the request of Leiden University, a site visit was planned on 4 December 2015. The programme of the site visit is included in Appendix 3. At the start of the site visit, the panel studied supplementary materials made available to the programme management (see Appendix 2).

In addition, a preparatory meeting was held on 3 December 2015 to ensure all panel members were instructed regarding the NVAO assessment framework for limited programme assessments (22 November 2011) and the NVAO points of departure for the assessment of programmes granted an improvement period (November 2014). The panel also discussed its working method, as well as its provisional findings on the progress reports and the theses.

Report

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the assessment panel’s findings. Subsequently, this draft report was sent to the assessment panel for feedback. After processing the panel members’ feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the university in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel’s chair and adapted the report accordingly before finalising it.

Decision rules

In accordance with the NVAO’s Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments (22 November 2011), the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of both the standards and the programme as a whole.

Generic quality

The quality that, from an international point of view, can reasonably be expected from a higher education bachelor’s or master’s programme.

Unsatisfactory

The programme does not meet the current generic quality standards and shows serious shortcomings in several areas.

Satisfactory

The programme meets the current generic quality standards and shows an acceptable level across its entire spectrum.

Good

The programme systematically surpasses the current generic quality standard.

Excellent

The programme systematically well surpasses the current generic quality standards across its entire spectrum and is regarded as an international example.

Summary judgement

This report deals with the assessment following an improvement period of the master's programme in African Studies at Leiden University. Based on the original assessment report from 2014, the programme was granted an improvement period. During this period, the programme was to improve Standards 2 and 3 of the original assessment framework, departing from an improvement plan approved by the NVAO. The assessment of Standard 1 as 'satisfactory' is maintained by the assessment panel.

Concerning Standard 2, the panel judges that all measures named in the improvement plan have been implemented very thoroughly. The curriculum has been adapted to enhance interdisciplinarity, an academic skills track has been introduced in the shape of a thesis seminar, and a mandatory internship in Africa has been implemented. In the process, collaboration with the African Studies Centre (ASC) has been enhanced and formalised. As a result, the programme now balances social sciences and humanities as well as a professional and an academic orientation. The panel is impressed and feels that this combination makes the programme both unique and exemplary. The panel finds that preparation of the students for the job market has been well taken care of, through the internship in Africa, the regular inclusion of alumni and professionals as guest lecturers and the network and community of management and teaching staff (now including ASC staff members). The panel is also positive about the changes in formal structures and is enthusiastic about the proactive and professional Teaching Committee replacing the old Teaching Committee. The panel concludes that study guidance and tutoring have been properly formalised and function well, particularly due to the new thesis seminar. It judges the new marketing plan to be promising and concludes that communication between students, staff and management is now much better than before.

Concerning Standard 3, the panel judges that assessment of thesis and internship has been regulated extensively in guidelines, and the Board of Examiners assures the quality of assessment through regular checks. The panel is positive about the theses produced even when the improvement plan had not yet been fully implemented: the theses and their assessments show a satisfactory level. Moreover, the theses contain methods and approaches from various disciplines, both humanities and social sciences. Consequently, the achieved learning outcomes match the intended learning outcomes. The panel is confident that theses written henceforth will show similar and even greater improvements.

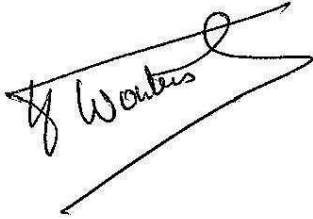
The panel applauds the programme for the ambitious way in which it has implemented changes and is impressed with the efforts which were made and which are still being made. The programme has acted on the recommendations formulated by the previous assessment panel and demonstrated the ambition to permanently improve its quality. The panel is fully confident that the programme will show even greater improvement in the near future.

The panel assesses the standards from the Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments in the following way:

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	good
Standard 3: Assessment and achieved learning outcomes	satisfactory
General conclusion	satisfactory

The chair and the secretary of the panel hereby declare that all members of the panel 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: 9 February 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Wouters', written over a horizontal line that extends to the left and right.

Prof. Alfons Wouters, chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Schouten', written over a horizontal line that extends to the left and right.

Dr. Fiona Schouten, secretary

Description of the standards from the Assessment framework for limited programme assessments

In its decision of 31 October 2014, the NVAO judged the improvement plan of the master's programme in African Studies sufficient to grant the programme an improvement period. The implementation of this plan should therefore allow the programme to meet the quality standards.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Explanation:

The contents and structure of the curriculum enable the students admitted to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The quality of the staff and of the programme-specific services and facilities is essential to that end. Curriculum, staff, services and facilities constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students.

Findings

In the 2013 report, the panel judged that the teaching-learning environment of the master's programme in African Studies did not meet the minimum requirements posed by the NVAO Framework for Limited Programme Assessments. The panel established that the curriculum's focus was primarily on history and literature and paid little attention to economics, sociology and cultural anthropology. Due to the fact that the programme's intended learning outcomes included knowledge of these disciplines and their methods, the panel concluded that improvement was necessary. In this section, the programme's implementation of the improvement measures concerning Standard 2 is discussed, leading to a new assessment of this standard.

Curriculum, learning tracks and interdisciplinarity

Since the 2013 assessment, and following the improvement plan, the programme has changed the curriculum in three major aspects. The first aspect has been the introduction of new courses and the adaptation of existing courses in the first semester; the second, the introduction of a thesis seminar running throughout the programme; and the third, the introduction of a mandatory internship in Africa in the first half of the second and last semester.

The first curriculum change, the adaptation of courses in the first semester, was implemented with the aim to create a programme which reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the programme as expressed in the intended learning outcomes. As in the old curriculum, students begin their first semester with 'The Field of African Studies' (10 EC), a course the master shares with the research master in African Studies. However, after completing this introduction to the interdisciplinary field, students are now required to follow four research courses of 5 EC which each combine at least two disciplines considered important within the field. The new 'Literature, Art, and Culture in Africa' research seminar combines literary studies and anthropology. 'History and Politics in Africa' is a continuation of the old history seminar, but has been altered to include political science. 'Language and Communication in Africa' is also a revised course and now combines linguistics, media studies and anthropology. Finally, the new course on 'Economy, Geography and Society in Africa' introduces economics and social sciences into the programme.

The new first semester resulting from these changes started in September 2015, in accordance with the trajectory sketched in the improvement plan. At the moment of the assessment, on 4 December 2015, it had therefore almost completed its first run. The panel looked at student evaluations of the 'The Field of African Studies' course and the 'Images of Africa' course, which were completed in the first block. The other three research seminars were still going on, but a midterm student evaluation (November 2015) offered insight into these. The panel also studied course setup and content through course descriptions provided by the programme, and discussed the courses with teaching staff as well as students.

Basing itself on these sources, the panel concludes that the programme has indeed succeeded in presenting an ambitious, thoroughly interdisciplinary curriculum. The panel finds that the revised curriculum of the first semester has a clear and coherent setup and prepares students well for conducting research in the various disciplines present within the field of African Studies. It applauds the programme for its efforts in adapting the courses to the intended learning outcomes. It finds that the courses combine disciplines in a logical, natural way: not only do they teach students various methods and approaches, but they also train them in interdisciplinary awareness. The students are invited to engage with each other while taking their various academic backgrounds into consideration, and to discuss issues from various points of view. In their final essays, they are required to demonstrate this interdisciplinary skillset. The courses are taught by staff members from various disciplines.

The panel is especially enthusiastic about the enhanced collaboration with the African Studies Centre (ASC) in Leiden. Informal ties between the programme and this research centre already existed, yet they have now been expanded and formalised following a recommendation by the previous assessment panel in 2014. As a result, teaching staff can now easily be recruited from the ASC. The panel considers the involvement of the ASC crucial in the strengthening of social science within the programme. Indeed, the new 'Economy, Geography and Society in Africa' course is set up and taught entirely by ASC staff. In the eyes of the panel, the ASC expertise plays a pivotal role in ensuring the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum.

The panel considers the overall course curriculum of the first semester to be feasible for the students. However, the panel learnt in its discussion with the students that feasibility of the second block of the first semester is somewhat compromised: three research seminars take place simultaneously and are simultaneously assessed. This means that students have to write various essays over a brief period of time. The panel was therefore pleased to note that preparations were being made to address this issue: staff and management were considering different types of assessment (such as oral presentations) and were looking into the possibilities of spreading assessments more evenly throughout the programme. The panel is confident that feasibility will be enhanced in the near future.

The panel notes that the course curriculum now presents a fine balance between humanities and social sciences. It considers this an impressive feat and congratulates the programme on accomplishing such a balance. The panel expresses the hope and expectation that the programme will continue to ensure that this balance does not tilt towards the social sciences. The African Studies master's programme is part of the Faculty of Humanities, and its renewed interdisciplinarity should not come at the expense of methods and approaches from within the humanities.

The second major adaptation within the curriculum has been the introduction of a thesis seminar (10 EC). This was done following a recommendation of the previous assessment

panel in order to promote academic skills and to provide students with a clear framework concerning the writing of their thesis. In the first semester, the thesis seminar focuses on the writing of a research proposal; in the second semester, the actual writing of the thesis is dealt with. The thesis seminar is obligatory for all students. Meetings take place every other week and allow students to present their progress and discuss challenges they encounter with fellow students and lecturers.

The thesis seminar was implemented as early as the academic year of 2014-2015, which allowed the panel to study course evaluations as well as a course description. The panel concludes that the thesis seminar has provided the programme with a clear way of monitoring progress and preventing delay. It also considers the course content and setup to be well chosen. Students acquire academic skills concerning the formulating of a research proposal, the conducting of research and the writing of a thesis. Moreover, the panel is pleased to note that here, too, interdisciplinary awareness is stimulated: students become acquainted with a wide spectrum of approaches and methods through peer-to-peer assessment and group discussion.

The final major change in the curriculum has been the introduction of a mandatory internship in Africa (10 EC). During the internship, research is conducted on which the master's thesis is based. Previously, this internship was an option within the curriculum. The previous assessment panel recommended turning it into an obligatory part of the programme, so that it would distinguish itself from the research master through a more practical orientation. The programme acted upon this recommendation. After making the internship optional for students in 2014-2015, it has made it obligatory for all students enrolled in the programme from September 2015 onwards. At the moment of the panel's site visit, the first group of students had completed the (then optional) internship. The first cohort of students to go on a mandatory internship had just finished arranging the internship in Africa, and was about to embark on a three-month period abroad in January.

The panel is pleased to see that the master's programme has given the internship such a prominent place in the curriculum. It considers this a truly distinguishing feature. In the eyes of the panel, the internship enhances the programme's practical orientation without compromising its academic nature. Students are prepared for the professional field while conducting interdisciplinary academic research. The panel is pleased to see that a balance is struck between the professional and the academic, and recommends the programme to see to it that this balance is not tilted towards either side.

The panel was not able to judge the function and execution of internships within the new programme, since mandatory internships had not yet been completed at the time of the assessment. However, considering the thorough preparation of the internships by the students and the programme's experience in successfully organizing such internships in 2014-2015, the panel is confident that the mandatory fieldwork will add greatly to the programme without compromising its feasibility.

The panel is glad to note that the financing of the internship has been guaranteed to all students. It finds, however, that the Faculty's working method concerning this matter can cause problems for the students in the programme. Due to a funding deadline, the students need to hand in their internship plan in the first half of November. This means they have only 2.5 months to establish contacts, find local supervisors, determine subject and method of the research and arrange other details. Students and staff alike mention that the early funding deadline makes them feel hurried and causes them stress. The panel notes that all

students starting in September 2015 made the deadline, which demonstrates the feasibility of this setup. Nonetheless, since it considers the internship distinguishing as well as essential to the programme, it urges faculty management to design a financial fast track, allowing students of the African Studies master's programme more time to prepare their internships.

Preparation for the job market

A further measure named in the programme's improvement plan was to enhance students' preparation for the job market. The programme did so by creating the mandatory internship in Africa, during which students conduct research in the context of the international professional field. In the eyes of the panel, this measure is crucial in preparing students for their future career. The panel is also enthusiastic about the involvement of alumni and professionals in the courses, usually as guest lecturers. Furthermore, it finds that students are introduced into a community of professionals and academics which provides them with valuable connections and support at the moment they graduate from the programme. All in all, then, the panel considers that the programme thoroughly prepares students for the job market.

Working method and functioning of the Teaching Committee

The curriculum change of the programme was accompanied by a change in formal structures. The programme now has a new Chair. The programme does not have its own staff; lecturers are assigned from the various research institutes by the Faculty. In order to implement the improvement measures, a Departmental Board was therefore formed, made up of management, teaching staff and a student member. A new Teaching Committee was assigned the task of monitoring this implementation and of organizing evaluation and feedback. This formal structure is backed by an informal one: since African Studies is a very specific field which draws small student numbers, information easily reaches all community members.

The panel is enthusiastic about the proactive attitude of the Teaching Committee (TC). The TC was formed in 2014 to replace a Teaching Committee which the African Studies master's programme shared with the research master's and bachelor's programmes in African Studies. The new programme-specific TC is made up of two students and two staff members, one of whom belongs to the ASC. In the brief period since its formation, the TC has proven its worth by closely monitoring the improvement of the programme. It has been doing so through course evaluations, and also through semester evaluations, where the student members discuss their experiences concerning the new curriculum with other students. The TC communicates its findings to the Departmental Board, which takes action if necessary. As a result of the TC's proactive and professional approach, streamlining the course curriculum to increase consistency between courses has now become a focal point of the Departmental Board. The panel considers this formal structure, which allows changes to be monitored very closely, to contribute to the programme's successful transition to the new curriculum.

Student intake

In the previous assessment, the panel pointed out that the number of students in the master's programme was critically low. In 2014-2015, only four students entered the programme; in the current academic year, eight did. In order to attract more students, the programme designed a joint marketing plan with the research master's programme in African Studies. This plan identifies the specificities of each master's programme by comparing the two. The regular master's programme is differentiated from the research master's programme through its duration (one year instead of two) and its focus on the job market due to the internship. The panel expects this strategy, reflected in new flyers and in a new video which had not been finished at the time of the assessment, to have a positive effect on student influx.

The programme also plans to increase student numbers through targeting potential students within related bachelor's programmes. The programme has identified a large group of potential students inside the own university. The 2013 cohort of the African Studies bachelor's programme and the African track of the International Studies bachelor's programme yield 35-40 potential students. Students of these programmes will be actively approached and informed by the programme. Efforts will also be made to draw students from Cultural Anthropology, Political Sciences and International Studies (UvA). The panel is confident that this strategy will lead to a higher student intake.

Study guidance and tutoring

Since 2013, the programme has formalised and structured the system of study guidance and tutoring. A key measure has been the introduction of the thesis seminar. The seminar contributes to preventing study delays and guides students in writing their research proposal and thesis. Since it is obligatory for all students, the thesis seminar also offers the programme the opportunity to link students to individual supervisors. Students receive a list at the beginning of the year from which they can select their two supervisors, from different disciplines, and have their choice approved by the Board of Examiners. The supervisors help the students determine scope, content and methods of their research and meet with them regularly. According to the students the panel interviewed during the site visit, this system works very well, especially since the community is experienced as tight-knit and the teaching staff as highly approachable. The panel is very positive about the continuous guidance students receive.

In the eyes of the panel, the African internship poses the greatest threat to study feasibility, since it removes students from their day-to-day supervisors and allows them to function in non-academic surroundings. The panel is positive about the system of tutoring regarding this internship. At the beginning of the year, the Study Coordinator and the thesis seminar address the need to arrange an internship immediately, and explain procedures. Students arrange their internships with the help of their supervisors, whose academic network is put to use, and have their internship proposals approved by the Board of Examiners. Upon starting their internship, students have identified their local supervisor and been in contact with him or her. There are regular contact moments between local and Leiden supervisors. Based on the 2014-2015 internships, the panel is confident that study guidance concerning the internships is well taken care of.

The panel is particularly impressed with the programme's attention to health and safety risks when students travel abroad. In determining whether students take risks they should not be taking, Leiden University follows the Foreign Affairs Ministry's guidelines. In case of doubt, the supervisors rely on their network for accurate information to advise the Faculty Board in taking a decision. The panel is pleased to hear that the programme is considering the formalisation of these procedures and finds its concern with this important issue laudable.

On the whole, the panel considers the students' curriculum to be challenging and balanced, but also quite dense and demanding. The panel is pleased to see that the management and staff are aware of this: staff members tend to be lenient when it comes to certain deadlines, particularly when it comes to finishing the thesis in June. This flexibility of the staff and their intense involvement in tutoring the students might become taxing, in the eyes of the panel, as soon as student numbers rise above 25; in the current size and shape of the programme, however, it considers study guidance to function well.

Communication

Communication issues between staff members and students were addressed by the programme through the revision of formal structures. Students are represented in the TC and the Departmental Board. Moreover, they were asked for input when courses were redesigned. Communication remains a key element in the programme's activities: various meetings per semester are organized, and students and staff members also meet with research master's and bachelor's students and personnel. Informal meetings and drinks are added to this. From its discussions with students and staff of the African Studies master's programme, the panel deduced that this particular research community is quite close and united. It concludes that communication has greatly improved since the last assessment.

Two newly arisen communication issues were mentioned by students during the site visit. The first concerned the relationship between thesis and internship. Students entering into the new programme in September 2015 had not explicitly been told that their internship investigation was to serve as the basis of their thesis. During the site visit, staff members confirmed that the link between both had not been stressed sufficiently in the thesis seminar, which caused confusion. The panel was pleased to note that staff members had identified this problem and planned to improve communication accordingly. Secondly, students pointed out that the specifics surrounding their mandatory internship were announced rather late. Some of them would have liked to organize it in the months preceding their master's programme. The panel advises the programme to address this issue. It considers both communication issues minor flaws caused by the fact that the programme is in its start-up phase and is confident they will be solved shortly.

Profile

The new profile of the programme is not a part of this assessment. Nevertheless, the panel greatly appreciates the fact that the programme acted on the 2013 assessment panel's recommendation. Following this recommendation, the programme adapted its profile to establish its position vis-à-vis the research master's programme in Leiden and related programmes abroad.

According to the panel, this has resulted in a profile which is truly unique in Europe. The programme opts for an interdisciplinary approach which combines humanities and social sciences. Its orientation is both academic and professional due to the mandatory internship in Africa. All in all, the panel considers the new profile to demarcate an outstanding and distinguishing new direction from which the programme will no doubt benefit greatly in the near future.

Considerations

The assessment panel judges that the master's programme in African Studies has greatly improved its teaching-learning environment. The reshaping of courses, the introduction of a thesis seminar and the introduction of a mandatory internship in Africa have resulted in an interdisciplinary curriculum which fully reflects the intended learning outcomes. In the process, collaboration with the African Studies Centre (ASC) has been enhanced and formalised. The curriculum provides a balance between social sciences and humanities, and it also balances an academic and a professional orientation. The panel finds that due to the African internship and the inclusion of guest lecturers, students are well-prepared for the job market. Changes were made in formal structures and a shared effort was made to improve the programme. The panel is impressed with the proactive and professional role of the Teaching Committee. It also noted improved communication between students, teaching staff and management, and is enthusiastic about the active role of students in the monitoring of the

programme's improvement. Furthermore, a new marketing strategy has been formulated which the panel finds promising. Study guidance and tutoring have been formalised and reinforced through the new thesis seminar. The panel considers this an impressive achievement. It concludes that the implementation of improvement measures has led to a teaching-learning environment which can be considered exemplary in the national context.

Conclusion

Master's programme African Studies: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'good'.

Standard 3: Assessment and achieved learning outcomes

The programme has an adequate assessment system in place and demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Explanation:

The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes. The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students.

Findings

In the 2013 report, the panel considered the achieved learning outcomes to fall short of the minimum requirements posed by the NVAO Framework for Limited Programme Assessments. The theses written by students of the master's programme in African Studies frequently only contained an approach and research method belonging to one field, rather than combining various disciplines. The panel also noted that the social sciences were underrepresented in the theses. As such, the theses did not reflect whether the students had learnt to combine humanities and social sciences. The theses thus did not show whether students had achieved all intended learning outcomes. In this section, the programme's implementation of the improvement measures concerning Standard 3 is discussed, leading to a new assessment of this standard.

Internship and thesis assessment guidelines

An important measure concerning Standard 3 has been the programme's adaptation of assessment guidelines. For both the internship and the thesis, a special addendum for the African Studies master's programme was formulated and made part of the Faculty Regulations in 2014-2015. This was deemed necessary considering the fact that the internship is mandatory, which sets the programme apart within the faculty. Furthermore, thesis and internship assessment forms were introduced. Thesis and internship proposal forms were created, which the Board of Examiners has to approve before the students can embark on their project. Through these forms and regulations, and with the aid of the newly created thesis seminar, supervision is regulated and its quality ensured. Students have an internship supervisor in Leiden and at least one in Africa. When writing their thesis, they have three supervisors: the main supervisor and two additional ones representing the two disciplines represented in the thesis. Thus, interdisciplinarity in the thesis is ensured. The Board of Examiners ensures quality of assessment by regularly evaluating courses and theses.

After looking at the new forms and assessment methods, the panel concludes that they are effective. In the eyes of the panel, the quality of assessment is now guaranteed. The panel is pleased with this development. However, it finds the corresponding administrative burden to be rather large. For instance, three thesis supervisors lead to four assessment forms (one each and a form which combines all different assessments and shows the final grade). While this burden may not be too taxing at the moment, considering the small amount of students, the

panel advises the programme management and the Board of Examiners to look into ways to streamline the administration.

Assessment and achieved learning outcomes

Prior to the site visit, the assessment panel looked at the six master's theses written in 2014–2015, since these best reflected the programme's achieved improvement. The panel concluded that the theses and their assessment demonstrated the level that might be expected at the conclusion of an academic master's degree. It also judged the grades to be justified.

Moreover, the panel looked at interdisciplinarity in the theses. It came to the conclusion that the theses now combine humanities and social sciences, demonstrating knowledge of each of these areas and their methods. The combination of disciplines is achieved in a way which the panel finds satisfactory and convincing. Methods and approaches are well-delineated and their combination leads to thorough reflection on the subject at hand. In some cases, students also show a clear interdisciplinary awareness and motivate their choice and combination of approaches and methods. Only one thesis limited its methodology mainly to the humanities. However, this thesis was a delayed project which had been begun before measures from the improvement plan were implemented. The thesis was also the only one assessed by two supervisors rather than three. Consequently, the panel considered this thesis to be the least representative of the changes that have been and are still being made.

The panel is enthusiastic about the level of interdisciplinarity already achieved in the theses. It is aware that at the time they were written, the programme had only implemented the first stage of changes described in the improvement plan (the introduction of the thesis seminar and the internship, at that point still non-mandatory). Therefore, the panel expects this positive development to continue in the future and to lead to even better results as the new curriculum is fully implemented.

Considerations

The panel judges that the theses and their assessments now show a satisfactory level. It concludes that on the whole they contain methods and approaches from various disciplines, balancing humanities and social sciences. Consequently, the achieved learning outcomes match the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Master's programme African Studies: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'satisfactory'.

General conclusion

The assessment panel concludes that the improvements made by the African Studies master's programme have resulted in a teaching-learning environment which reflects the programme's intended learning outcomes. According to the panel, the curriculum incorporates a thoroughly interdisciplinary approach and balances social sciences and humanities. The panel considers the programme unique and exemplary in its setup. It is especially positive about the mandatory internship in Africa, which lends the programme a professional as well as an academic focus. The panel also concludes that almost all theses produced during the first phase of improvements demonstrate clear interdisciplinarity, combining methods from social sciences and humanities. In the light of this result and the ongoing improvement, the panel is confident that future theses will do so even more aptly and explicitly.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *master's programme African Studies* as 'satisfactory'.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Curricula vitae of the members of the assessment panel

Prof. Alfons Wouters (1944) studied Classical Philology at KU Leuven in Belgium. In 1973, he gained a PhD with a dissertation on the history of grammatical science in Graeco-Roman Antiquity. He specialized in literary papyri under Prof. Eric Turner at University College London. Between 1974 and 1978, he was a researcher with the Belgian National Foundation for Scientific Research (NFWO) while also teaching historical Greek and Latin grammar at the University Faculties Sint Ignatius Antwerp. In 1978, he began teaching Greek Language and Literature at KU Leuven, and was made full professor in 1986. He was a visiting professor in Groningen and at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. During his career in Leuven, he chaired the Kortrijk subfaculty of Arts several times. He was also chair of the Educational Committee of Classical Philology and of the Classical Studies department in Leuven. In 1998, he participated in the assessment of Classical Languages and Cultures in the Netherlands, and in 2005 he assessed Romance Languages. Wouters is currently Professor emeritus with formal duties, teaching at Leuven and participating in various research projects on classical linguistics within the Leuven Center for the Historiography of Linguistics. He is the author of three books and over one hundred scholarly articles, as well as co-editor of six monographs and board member of four international journals.

Prof. Giorgio Banti (1949) has been full professor at the Oriental University of Naples since 1997. He teaches General and Historical Linguistics as well as Somali Language and Literature. Between 1978 and 1989, he was part of a project funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for developing the Somali language. He has also directed or participated in research projects on the languages and cultures of the Horn of Africa and, more widely, of Sub-Saharan Africa, varying in scope from language typology to historical linguistics. He has conducted field research in former Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Sudan. Banti was a Member of the Board of Administration of the University of Potenza, a member of the Scientific Board of the IsIAO (Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient), President of the Degree Course in Comparative Studies of the Oriental University of Naples and Director of the Department for Studies and Research on Africa and the Arab Countries in the Oriental University. He was also a member of the Board of Administration of the Oriental University of Naples from December 2006 to July 2012. In November 2014, he was appointed Vice-President of the Oriental University of Naples.

Magalie Kisukurume, BA (1990) is a master's student in African Studies at Ghent University in Belgium. She gained a bachelor's degree in African studies at that same university. Her bachelor's thesis dealt with press freedom in Burundi. She is currently working on her master's thesis, an anthropological analysis of Burundian journalists in exile in Kigali. For this research, she will be conducting fieldwork in Rwanda in February 2016. Previously, she was involved in the assessment of the African Studies department of Ghent University.

Appendix 2: Documents studied by the assessment panel

Prior to the site visit, the assessment panel studied the theses of the students with the following student numbers:

0882224	1515225
1197983	1576356
1426591	1603213

In addition, the panel studied the following documents:

- The assessment report 'Regiostudies. Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen, Universiteit Leiden' (Cluster 2, QANU, 1 April 2014);
- NVAO-besluit African Studies, 31 October 2013;
- Recovery Plan for the Master's Programme in African Studies, Leiden University (24 June 2014);
- Situational Sketch of the Improvement of the MA African Studies, Leiden University (10 November 2015);
- Course Evaluation Images of Africa;
- Preliminary List of Internship Positions;
- Addendum to the Faculty's Regulations concerning the procedure surrounding the master's thesis;
- Forms concerning thesis and internships;
- Documentation on the marketing plan to promote African Studies;
- Midterm Evaluation African Studies.

Appendix 3: Programme of the site visit

Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University Date: December 4, 2015 Location: Academiegebouw, Rapenburg 67-73, Leiden		
Time slot	Session	Panel
9.30-10.30	<i>Preparation</i>	<committee only>
10.30-11.15	Management	dr. Joost Augusteijn (vice-dean) dr. Daniela Merolla (chair departmental board) Agustina Alvarez (student member departmental board)
11.15-12.00	Students (incl. members teaching committee)	Matthew McDonald (student member teaching committee) Georgia Letcher (student member teaching committee) Jasmijn Holsteijn
12.00-13.00	<i>Break – incl. lunch</i>	<committee only>
13.00-13.45	Teaching staff (incl. member teaching committee)	Prof.dr. Mirjam de Bruijn (member teaching committee) Dr. Klaas van Walraven Dr. Daniela Merolla Dr. Meike de Goede Prof.dr. Ton Dietz
13.45-14.30	Board of Examiners (incl. secretary and external member)	Dr. Felix Ameka (chair) Dr. Mayke Kaag Dr. Meike de Goede Drs. Sander Bos (secretary) Drs. Astrid Koster (external member)
14.30-16.00	<i>Draw up conclusions and preparation debriefing</i>	<committee only>
16:00-16.30	Debriefing with management	Dr. Joost Augusteijn Dr. Daniela Merolla Sanne Arens
16.30	Final feedback, drinks	All