

# Master of Laws: Advanced Studies in International Children's Rights Leiden University

2 December 2014

Initial accreditation

Panel report

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## 1 Executive summary

This report is issued by the audit team appointed by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) to assess the conditions for initial accreditation of the Master of Laws Advanced Studies programme in International Children's Rights (ICR) at Leiden University. The small-scale, English language programme targets experienced legal professionals and newly graduated lawyers from around the world who wish to specialise in children's rights. The application concerns a one-year full-time programme of 60 credits, which can also be followed in a part-time variant.

The new programme on International Children's Rights (ICR) is set up by Leiden Law School, which has developed several advanced Leiden Law School Master (LLM) programmes in recent years. The ICR programme management benefited from the experience at the Law School in developing such programmes and in preparing initial accreditation files. Moreover, the new programme is embedded in existing policies, systems and regulations at both faculty and university level.

The ICR programme objectives have been established with the support of the professional field, academic staff and international students. Programme developers have made considerable efforts to formulate learning outcomes, which the panel considers clear, specific and adequate for a legal programme of academic orientation at advanced master's level.

The exclusive focus on international children's rights is unique for education programmes in the Netherlands and beyond. The new programme strikes a fine balance between academia and the professional world: according to the panel, it offers not only specialist legal knowledge and advanced academic skills, but it also prepares students for a legal career in the field of international children's rights.

The programme consists of eight courses and a thesis. According to the panel, the courses together form a coherent curriculum. Following its review of the course outlines and the discussions on site, the panel is generally satisfied with the curriculum contents and considers that the learning goals of individual courses are linked to the envisaged learning outcomes at programme level. Nevertheless, it invites the programme to better accommodate the subject of child victims and witnesses.

The admission criteria are strict and the selection procedure is clear. The panel encourages the Board of Admissions to set clear benchmarks when considering applications from graduates without a full law degree. The tuition fee is not excessive but may prevent students without a scholarship from applying. The panel therefore supports the intentions of the management to look for alternative funding schemes. In this way, the global character of the programme will also be reflected in the range of incoming students.

The panel has encountered a coherent team of highly motivated staff on site: lecturers are established experts in their own field and support staff is very professional. Academic and administrative staff together plan to provide very adequate guidance for students, who will also benefit from the very good facilities that are available for advanced LLM students.

The description of the assessment procedures, the review of exams and papers from other advanced LLM programmes and the discussion on site with lecturers have convinced the panel that the new ICR programme includes an adequate assessment system. Both assessment modes and evaluation criteria are transparent for students. Moreover, lecturers have a clear vision on what they want to assess, and how. The examination board is already in place: according to the panel, it is functioning independently from the management and the board members feel competent to address the various tasks assigned to them.

The panel acknowledges the guarantee from Leiden Law School that all students who are enrolled on the new programme should be able to complete it. Moreover, previous investments in other advanced LLM programmes entail that there are no major additional programme-specific investments. Costs linked to the new ICR programme will be covered entirely with the enrolment fees of 15 students. Leiden Law School is providing sufficient financial resources to develop and start the programme; if required it will financially support the programme for at least three years.

Considering that the new programme fulfils in a satisfactory way all four quality standards set by the NVAO assessment framework, the panel advises NVAO to take a positive decision regarding the quality of the proposed Master of Laws Advanced Studies programme in International Children's Rights at Leiden University.

The Hague, 2 December 2014

On behalf of the Initial Accreditation panel convened to assess the Master of Laws Advanced Studies programme in International Children's Rights at Leiden University,

Prof. dr. Willem van Genugten  
(chair)

Mr. Mark Delmartino, MA  
(secretary)

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Procedure

NVAO received a request for an initial accreditation procedure regarding a new programme to be offered at Leiden University, the Master of Laws Advanced Studies in International Children's Rights. The NVAO convened a panel of experts consisting of:

- Prof. dr. Willem van Genugten, Tilburg University, chair;
- Prof. dr. Ann Skelton, University of Pretoria, member;
- Mr. Joren Selleslaghs, alumnus College of Europe, student-member.

The composition of the audit team reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO for this initial accreditation exercise. Prof. dr. Wouter Vandenhoe, University of Antwerp, was included on the panel, but eventually withdrew to avoid any possible conflict of interest. Short CV's of the panel members are provided in annex 1. On behalf of NVAO, drs. Lisette Winsemius was responsible for the coordination of the assessment process. The external secretary, Mark Delmartino, drafted the advisory report in close cooperation with the panel members and the chair. All panel members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel has based its assessment on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Accreditation Framework (Stcrt. 2010, nr 21523). Leiden University having successfully passed the institutional quality assurance assessment, this new programme is assessed according to the limited initial accreditation framework.

The panel members studied the application file of the proposed programme and reported on their preliminary findings, which the secretary collected and processed in view of the preparatory meeting in Leiden on 30 October 2014. At this meeting, the panel discussed the preliminary findings, identified the most important issues for discussion on site and prepared the individual meeting sessions.

The site visit took place at the Academiegebouw in Leiden on 31 October 2014. The panel had discussions with representatives of the Leiden Law School management, the programme development team, the teaching staff and the professional field. The panel also visited the Law School, its library and student services. The schedule of the visit is available in annex 2. Annex 3 lists the materials made available by the programme either before or during the site visit.

The panel then formulated its considerations and preliminary conclusions per quality standard. These are based on the findings of the site visit and build on the assessment of the programme documents and information materials. The secretary then drafted the advisory report and circulated it to all panel members for review and feedback. The comments of the members were incorporated in a final version, which was validated by the chair on 2 December 2014, and submitted on behalf of the panel to NVAO.

## 2.2 Panel report

The first chapter of this report is the executive summary, while the current chapter is the introduction. The third chapter gives a description of the programme including its position within both Leiden University and the higher education system of the Netherlands. The panel presents its assessments in the fourth chapter. The programme is assessed by reviewing the standards in the Initial Accreditation Framework. For each standard the panel presents an outline of its findings, its considerations and a conclusion. The *findings* are the objective facts as found by the panel in the programme documents, in the additional documents and during the site visit. The *considerations* are the panel's subjective evaluations regarding these findings and the importance of each. The considerations presented by the panel logically lead to a concluding *assessment*. The fifth chapter of the report consists of a table featuring an overview of the panel assessments per standard.

## 3 Description of the programme

### 3.1 Overview

Country	The Netherlands
Institution	Universiteit Leiden
Programme	wo-master Advanced Studies of International Children's Rights (postgraduate)
Level	master
Orientation	academic (wo)
Degree	Master of Laws
Location	Leiden
Mode of study	full-time or part-time
Field of study	Law

### 3.2 Profile of the institution

Founded in 1575, Leiden University is the oldest university in the Netherlands and the first university where freedom of belief and religion was practised. Leiden University has since evolved to become a centre of teaching and research, featuring seven faculties and more than 100 bachelor's and master's programmes.

The new programme on ICR is developed by Leiden Law School (LLS). Apart from degree programmes in Dutch, LLS has an extensive offering of English-taught law courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. At undergraduate level students from around the world can attend courses and transfer the academic credits obtained to be used towards a degree at the home institution. The Master of Laws programmes are part of the standard Dutch law curriculum and form the required elements for students wishing to qualify for legal practice in the Netherlands. Advanced Studies programmes are specifically designed for excellent students with a full legal degree and for qualified lawyers who wish to enhance their career prospects. Currently, LLS offers eight NVAO accredited advanced programmes.

### 3.3 Profile of the programme

The Advanced Studies programme in International Children's Rights is a small-scale, English taught programme aimed at legal professionals who wish to specialise in the area of children's rights. The programme is embedded in the Child Law Department, which in turn is part of the Institute of Private Law. The Department possesses specialist expertise, organises Summer Schools on ICR and offers a number of courses on ICR at bachelor's and master's level.

Entering the programme, students should already hold a law degree that gives access to the legal professions in the country where the degree was obtained. Because of the level of prior education and experience of the vast majority of enrolled students, the teaching and training in this programme is intended to be more intensive and immediately starts at a higher level than regular master's programmes.

The ICR programme is new for Leiden University. LLS already offers a Dutch-language master's programme in Child Law, but this programme focuses on Dutch law and prepares students for a legal profession in the Netherlands. The application contains an extensive report comparing the new programme to existing programmes at national, European and global level. The new programme is unique in its combination of four elements: the law degree, the advanced level, the emphasis on the international dimension of children's rights, and the exclusive focus on children. Many programmes are comparable in one, two or even three dimensions, but none consists of the same four elements.

#### *Curriculum*

The curriculum consists of eight courses and a thesis with a total study load of 60 EC. The programme is offered full-time (one academic year) and part time (same programme spread over two academic years):

- Interaction between children's rights and other international legal systems (10 EC)
- Justice for children in conflict with the law (5 EC)
- Child and family in private international law (5 EC)
- Economic, social and cultural rights of children (5 EC)
- Child protection and children's rights (5 EC)
- Migration and children's rights (5 EC)
- Enforcement and monitoring of children's rights (10 EC)
- Measures of implementation and the role of non-state actors (optional, 5 EC)
- Children's rights and digital technologies (optional, 5 EC)
- Thesis (10 EC)



## 4 Assessment per standard

### 4.1 Intended learning outcomes (standard 1)

*The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.*

#### *Findings*

The purpose of the advanced Master of Laws programme in International Children's Rights (further referred to as 'advanced LLM' or 'ICR programme') has been described extensively in the application file. The programme aims to offer an advanced level of education on the impact of ICR in different areas of law affecting children and on the challenges for implementing the human rights of children. The new ICR programme also focuses on the complex role and responsibilities of different actors (such as the state, parents, guardians and private actors) in safeguarding the rights of the child. In this regard, the programme aims to facilitate the students' understanding of international legal instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Moreover, the purpose of the programme is both academic and professional: the advanced LLM does not only offer legal knowledge and academic skills, but also prepares students for a legal career in the specific field of (international) children's rights. According to the application file, the most distinctive features of the programme are as follows:

- it looks at ICR from a comparative perspective;
- it includes an exploration of the UNCRC, as well as of major regional systems;
- it studies the impact of ICR on domestic jurisdictions;
- It studies the most significant challenges with regard to the ICR implementation;
- it analyses the complex roles of the different addressees, and their interrelation;
- it offers a critical reflection on ICR, and on the potential and limitation of international and regional standards for the legal protection of children;
- it offers a critical reflection of the UNCRC as core instrument of ICR;
- it has a fixed, coherent and coordinated structure, which contributes to the specialised nature of the programme.

Given that there is no internationally defined domain-specific reference framework for ICR, the programme developers have worked meticulously when establishing learning outcomes for the new ICR programme. First of all, they looked into the joint 'subject specific reference framework' which was drawn up in 2009 by the Discipline Committee for Law of the Association of Research Universities in the Netherlands. According to this framework an academic law programme needs to provide insight into the key features of the law, its role in society, key concepts, the primary legal fields and their interconnectivity, the boundaries of law, as well as its relativity from a multidisciplinary point of view.

Secondly, the programme developers have ensured that the learning outcomes meet the requirements of the Dublin-descriptors for an education programme at master's level. The correlation between the five Dublin-descriptors and the eight learning outcomes is described in depth in the application file.

Thirdly, the programme goals and learning outcomes have been finetuned in view of the academic and professional judgement of the programme staff, the requirements of the academic and professional field, the feedback from international students at LLS, and the assessment of programmes in the field. The programme developers have consulted formally and informally a considerable number of parties, including international students, lecturers, high-level professionals with practical experience and fellow academics with considerable academic teaching experience in the area of children's rights. Their constructive feedback has provided valuable input for the programme, and has been reported separately in the application file. The panel, moreover, spoke to four representatives of the professional field during the site visit.

The resulting learning outcomes of the ICR programme are listed in appendix 4 to this report and are grouped around eight competencies: basic and overarching knowledge; specialist knowledge; research abilities; presentation of knowledge; application of knowledge; working environment; ICT skills; and keeping up knowledge.

The programme is conceived at an advanced master's level, meaning that students should have completed a full law degree before entering the programme. It caters for the needs of students aspiring to either an academic or a professional career. LLS has extensive experience in organising advanced LLM programmes. The new ICR programme is the ninth advanced LLM catering to a group of students who benefit from close contact with their professors and with expert practitioners from the relevant legal field. Because students who enrol in the new ICR programme are likely to have a higher level of prior education and experience than their counterparts at regular LLM programmes, the teaching and training in this programme is more intensive and immediately starts at a higher level: the master's qualifications are as a rule attained and regularly surpassed.

Upon completion, the graduate has the competencies to address complex legal questions in the field of children's rights and to work with and within a variety of legal systems as legal professional in an international environment. During the site visit, the management indicated that the programme also offers a good basis for conducting further independent academic research and that learning outcomes are set at such level that successful students can move on to an academic career by entering a PhD track.

#### *Considerations*

According to the panel, the new ICR programme strikes a fine balance between academia and the world of work: professionals, academics and students have been consulted during the development phase and their respective input has been integrated in the programme outline.

The panel considers that programme developers have put much effort into formulating the learning outcomes of the new programme, taking into account relevant frameworks such as the subject specific reference framework for academic law programmes in the Netherlands or the Europe-wide Dublin descriptors for a qualification at master's level. Moreover, they took on board the academic and professional judgement of the programme staff, as well as the requirements of the international academic and professional field. These perspectives have all been integrated into learning outcomes which according to the panel are clear, specific and adequate for a legal programme of academic orientation at master's level.

LLS has extensive experience offering programmes at both 'regular' master's level and 'advanced' master's level. The panel has noticed during the site visit that all interlocutors are very well aware of what this advanced level entails. The objectives, contents and approach of the new programme presented in the application file and discussed during the site visit definitely reflect a level that goes beyond a mere master's degree.

The panel acknowledges that the programme's explicit focus on international children's rights is unique and considers the ICR programme to be a relevant addition to the existing programmes on offer at Leiden University, in the Netherlands and abroad. In this regard, the panel highly appreciates the benchmarking efforts by the programme developers: the section in the report comparing the Advanced LLM in International Children's Rights with other national and international master programmes in the area of children's rights / child law is very informative.

In sum, the panel considers that LLS has gone to great lengths to develop a programme that exclusively focuses on ICR, a topic of increasing importance nationally, internationally and globally. The programme objectives have been established with the input of the professional field, staff and students and the learning outcomes adequately reflect the envisaged content, level and orientation.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses standard 1 'Intended learning outcomes' as **satisfactory**.

## **4.2 Teaching-learning environment (standard 2)**

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

#### *Outline of findings*

The curriculum consists of eight courses and a thesis for a total study load of 60 ec. The courses are listed in section 3.3. Across all modules, a total of 220 contact hours is foreseen. In line with university policy, each course is allocated a certain level ranging from 100 to 600. All modules in the ICR curriculum are at level 600 indicating highly specialised courses.

The panel studied the outline of each course in the information file and critically assessed the course documentation during the site visit. For every course, the outline featured not only the objectives, learning goals and contents, but also the respective modes of instruction and assessment, as well as the reading list. During the site visit, the panel discussed the specific contents of the courses with seven lecturers and programme coordinators. They clarified on that occasion that the course materials for the advanced LLM are under development but not yet finalised as these courses have never been taught for an audience of advanced LLM students. Several courses, such as for instance the one on migration and children's rights, are currently taught in the regular LLM. Once the new ICR programme is accredited, the same lecturer will deliver an additional course exclusively targeting advanced LLM students. Moreover, the panel was shown an extensive programme matrix linking the specific learning goals of each course to the overall learning outcomes at

programme level. Several lecturers explained to the panel how they intended to implement the matrix in the day-to-day reality of their courses.

The programme starts with an overarching course on the interaction between children's rights and international legal systems. In this course students from different legal backgrounds and with different knowledge levels are brought to a comparable level of competency. The second semester features a larger course on professional skills. The thesis includes lab sessions with a seminar on research methodology. Asked whether 10 ec is sufficient to train academic research skills, the management indicated that this is standard LLS policy for advanced LLM programmes and that in addition to the thesis, students are also trained in research skills through other courses and course assignments.

Seven courses are compulsory, while students can choose for the remaining module between two courses. The limited number of electives is a deliberate choice, according to the programme management. Whilst the number of courses will not expand right away, the number of optional courses may increase in future. Similarly certain courses may change status, from core to optional or the other way around. The course on non-state actors for instance is currently optional but might become part of the core curriculum in due course.

Several interlocutors mentioned that the internship constitutes an additional opportunity to acquire professional skills and prepare for the labour market. Such placement, however, is an optional part of the programme for which students do not get credits. This is a deliberate choice of the programme management and is supported by lecturers and the professional field. Whilst the programme will support interested students in obtaining such placement, it should not become a compulsory element because the programme cannot guarantee a place for all students and the period would be too long in order to contribute properly to the learning outcomes. Moreover, allocating credits to the internship would require the elaboration of learning goals in line with the overall learning outcomes, as well as a proper assessment mechanism of these learning goals and outcomes.

In order to qualify for selection, applicant students should hold a law degree that gives access to the legal profession in the country where the degree was obtained, have proven English language proficiency, show good performance in their previous studies and demonstrate a keen interest in ICR. Applications are reviewed by the Board of Admissions, including the programme director and the academic and programme coordinator. The selection criteria allow some flexibility in the sense that individuals with extensive and relevant professional experience but without a full law degree may be considered for admission. The programme management indicated during the site visit that it has a clear view on whom to accept (or not), but will make this viewpoint operational on a case-by-case basis. LLS policy for Advanced LLM programmes caps the student intake at 40, but figures are often (much) lower. Faculty members prefer quality over quantity in order to devote sufficient time to each student.

The programme aims at an international student body with a balanced representation of backgrounds, religions and countries. The limited number and diverse background of students are considered highly advantageous for didactic purposes and class dynamics. According to the programme coordinator, the main challenge will be to attract students from developing countries, hence the need to organise scholarships. Once accredited, the programme will also be promoted among students in neighbouring countries such as

Germany, France and Poland. Once registered, students will get reading materials before the start of the programme in order to familiarise themselves with the terminology.

The programme is offered both as a one-year full-time and a two-year part-time variant. It is LLS policy to allow students with professional duties to combine study and work by taking half of the courses each semester. Experience from other advanced LLM programmes shows that every year a minority of students, often working in an international context at The Hague, is making use of this opportunity.

Most staff on the new ICR programme belongs to the Child Law Department, which consists of twelve (assistant) professors, postdoctoral researchers and PhD students. Every course will be taught by several lecturers under the coordination of one professor, who is also responsible for ensuring the input of guest lecturers contributes appropriately to the courses. The information file contained an overview of allocated staff, positions, scope of appointment, level and expertise. The panel, moreover, studied the CV's of all course coordinators and met seven lecturers on site. All are educated to PhD-level and have ample experience in research and education. Many lecturers have practical experience in the area of children's rights.

The specific course set-up requires extensive coordination: each coordinator is responsible for internal course coherence and for achieving the learning goals and learning outcomes. There are regular meetings among lecturers within courses, among course coordinators, and between coordinators and the programme director.

The new ICR programme is embedded in the structures of LLS and students will make use of the existing services and facilities at both faculty and university. The panel visited the Kamerlingh Onnes building, home to the Leiden Law School, and was shown around the library and the student support services. The panel noticed that the building is renovated and equipped with modern facilities and services. The LLS library is well furnished and the panel was told that it has sufficient financial means to acquire compulsory reading materials and additional (online) journals on ICR. All advanced LLM students can use a dedicated library facility in the coordinators' office, as well as a thesis library.

Student progress is monitored by the individual lecturer, who discusses key concerns with the course coordinator. The academic coordinator is in charge of academic support and overall coordination; the programme coordinator deals with overall logistical support to the programme. Both coordinators are available on a daily basis for student support and guidance. The programme director ensures the quality of teaching within the programme. In addition to these structures, students can access their lecturers directly before or after the course or through email. Finally, both LLS and the university offer a range of specialist services and facilities for (inter)national students.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the programme is built in a coherent way and that the curriculum contents cover the envisaged learning outcomes. Moreover, the panel is satisfied with the clarifications provided on site with regard to specific programme-related topics: lecturers provided a clear vision on how to address learning outcomes such as ICT skills and keeping up knowledge; students are properly trained in academic research and can apply their skills throughout the programme, not only during the thesis; the introductory course aims to provide all students with baseline knowledge in ICR; the internship is conceived as a useful

yet voluntary scheme which the programme will be promoting and facilitating; and the sheer number of (guest) lecturers envisaged for each course is balanced by extensive coordination efforts of the course convenors and the programme director.

Following its review of the course outlines and discussions on site, the panel is generally satisfied with the curriculum contents and considers that the learning goals of individual courses are linked to the envisaged learning outcomes at programme level. Nevertheless, the panel invites the programme to adjust the course on 'justice for children in conflict with the law' in order to better accommodate the subject of child victims and witnesses. Moreover the panel suggests the inclusion of Aoife Nolan's book on Children's socio-economic rights in the literature underpinning the course 'economic, social and cultural rights of children'.

The panel considers that the admission criteria are strict, but appropriate: there are clear requirements and expectations regarding the level of legal knowledge prior to the programme start. The selection procedure is clear, although the provision that 'graduates from fields other than law may also be admitted, provided their previous studies included a substantial legal component' will require a case-by-case approach at the start in order to establish proper benchmarking afterwards. The panel invites the programme to communicate clearly about this issue so that future applicants know when they would be allowed to the programme and when not.

The panel was very impressed by the staff involved in the programme, both in terms of quality and quantity. Lecturers are invariably established experts in their own field, while support staff is dedicated to their tasks and very professional. Moreover, the panel has encountered a coherent team of highly motivated staff who are committed to ICR and to the students who come to Leiden for an advanced LLM programme.

According to the panel, the future ICR student will benefit from the good quality services and facilities that are already available for advanced LLM students. Following the discussions on site, the panel is convinced that academic and support staff together will provide adequate guidance for all students: offering excellent research opportunities for high potentials, facilitating an internship period for those in want of professional training, and spotting and remedying deficiencies in the knowledge or skills of less experienced students.

In sum, the panel considers that nine months prior to the envisaged starting date of the advanced LLM programme, the ICR curriculum contents have been developed to a large extent. The new programme will be embedded in existing facilities and services of high quality. The academic and support staff from their side are very much aware of what the programme sets out to do and are capable - and keen - to deliver it.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses standard 2 'Teaching-learning environment' as **satisfactory**.

### 4.3 Assessment (standard 3)

*The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The assessment system for the new ICR programme is described in the Course and Examination Regulations that are common to all advanced LLM programmes at LLS. The examination board is also common to all advanced LLM programmes. At the time of the site visit, there was no specific assessment material available for the new ICR programme. The course outlines contained an indication of the respective assessment modes. Given that the assessment system is common to all advanced LLM programmes, the panel has looked into documents illustrating the overall assessment system such as exam grading instructions, thesis and paper grading criteria, or provisions on plagiarism. Moreover, in order to familiarise with the type of assessment products that will be implemented in the new ICR programme, the panel studied assessment materials such as exams, papers, theses and feedback forms from other advanced LLM programmes.

Courses are assessed in different ways, depending on the nature of the course and the materials and skills to be assessed. The specific mode(s) of assessment also depend on the learning outcomes to be achieved and the level at which these outcomes are tested. At the start of each course, students are given a clear indication which learning outcomes are addressed and how these will be assessed throughout the course. At the end of each course a final exam takes place. A feedback session with the lecturer and the students is held once the exam results have been distributed. All advanced LLM programmes are adopting a joint format for awarding grades: it consists of criteria that need to be borne in mind when assessing exams, papers and presentations, and of forms that need to be completed for each piece of assessed work.

The examination board is appointed by the Faculty Board and consists of four lecturers from different advanced LLM programmes and one secretary. The examination board is responsible for a variety of tasks including the assessment of exam quality, the adherence to programme rules and regulations, student appeals, and fraud. A representative of the examination board indicated to the panel that the board is operating independently from the management and that the current members are very experienced. When needed, members can get specific training on assessment or other tasks through the university-based ICLON institute.

#### *Considerations*

The panel has not seen any assessment material developed specifically for the ICR programme. Nevertheless, the panel is convinced that the new programme disposes of an adequate assessment system. It bases this appreciation on the description of the assessment modes in the course outlines, the written tests, papers and theses on other advanced LLM programmes made available on site, and the discussion on ICR course assessments with lecturers and a representative of the examination board.

According to the panel, the programme foresees a variety of assessment modes throughout the programme testing different aspects of student competencies. The assessment system and its individual products are transparent for students. In this respect, the panel appreciates the pre-exam and post-exam sessions where students are informed about the forthcoming assessment (criteria) and consult / discuss the feedback to their test.

Basing its appreciation on the examples provided on site, the panel considers that the programme has a good quality assessment system for papers, featuring extensive written feedback to motivate the marks given to a written assignment. The discussion with lecturers, moreover, convinced the panel that there is a clear vision among staff on what they want to assess and how they want to do this.

Further to the discussion with the examination board representative, the panel considers that this board will continue to function adequately when the new ICR programme is up and running.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses standard 3 'Assessment' as **satisfactory**.

#### **4.4 Graduation guarantee and financial provisions (standard 4)**

*The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.*

#### *Outline of findings*

During the site visit the Dean of LLS confirmed what had been mentioned in the application file: each student who is enrolled in the new programme will have the opportunity to finish it within a reasonable period of time.

The new programme is the ninth advanced LLM programme at LLS. Previous investments in other programmes entail that right now there are no major investments to make for the ICR programme, which can use existing LLS facilities that are said to be sufficient and of high quality. According to the management, the programme will be fully financed by tuition fees. Costs linked to the programme will be covered entirely as soon as 15 students enrol. In the meantime, LLS is making available sufficient financial resources to develop and start the programme; when needed, it will financially support the programme for at least three years.

It is policy of LLS to only publicise and promote a new programme after it has been accredited by NVAO. At the time of the site visit, therefore, the management was not in a position to anticipate the number of candidates for this programme nor the range of income this programme will yield at the start. However, the management was very clear in its commitment to and ambitions for the programme: ideally, they envisage 25 students per year, with 10 students being the lower limit in terms of didactical relevance and 35 students the upper limit for individual counselling and support. Several interlocutors indicated that Leiden University has a good reputation, which in itself is attracting students every year. Moreover, the involvement of both professionals and students in the consultation phase should make the new ICR programme attractive for potential applicants. All in all, interlocutors anticipate that the programme will welcome sufficient numbers of good quality students to make it financial sustainable.

During the site visit, the panel discussed the enrolment fee, which is moderate compared to other LLM programmes in the United Kingdom or the United States but constitutes an obstacle for students without scholarship, notably those coming from developing countries.



The programme management explicitly aims for an international student audience, including high potentials from developing countries, but is aware that the existing range of scholarships will not cover the needs of all applicants. The programme director confirmed that this is a concern and considers it his duty to invest in additional scholarship opportunities. During the very first years, the programme is likely to attract mainly students who can afford the tuition fee or are successful in getting one of the few Leiden Excellence Scholarships. The management nevertheless pointed out that similar concerns were raised at the start of the advanced LLM in Human Rights, but that this programme is now followed by students from different countries around the world, including students from development countries who obtained a national scholarship.

#### *Considerations*

The panel acknowledges the firm commitment of the applicant to guarantee that students who are enrolled on the programme should be able to complete it. The panel, moreover, considers that the programme has been developed and will be rolled out in an environment which is financially sound. In this respect, the new programme is embedded in existing structures at LLS and benefits from the experience gained with similar ongoing programmes.

The budgetary forecast is realistic, according to the panel. Given previous investments in other advanced LLM courses, the additional programme-specific expenditure is limited: the envisaged investment of two full-time staff equivalents will undoubtedly add value to the quality of the programme. The income is generated through student fees. The new ICR programme will be profitable in the short-run provided at least 15 students enrol per year, which according to the panel is feasible. The panel, moreover, thinks highly of the applicant's intention to reinvest any profit into the programme.

The panel acknowledges the intentions of the programme director to look for alternative funding schemes and strongly supports the stated objective to have the global character of the programme reflected in the range of incoming students.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses standard 4 'Graduation guarantee and financial provisions' as **satisfactory**.

## 5 Overview of the assessments

The panel presents its assessments per standard, as outlined in chapter 4, in the following table.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1 Intended learning outcomes	Satisfactory
2 Teaching-learning environment	Satisfactory
3 Assessment	Satisfactory
4 Graduation guarantee and financial provisions	Satisfactory
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

## **Annex 1: Composition of the panel**

### ***Prof. dr. Willem van Genugten, Chair***

Mr. van Genugten studied Law and Philosophy at Nijmegen University and is professor of International Law at Tilburg University and at the North-West University in South-Africa (extraordinary chair). Between 1991 and 2006, he has also been professor of Human Rights Law at Nijmegen University. As of now, he also is, inter alia, Chair of the Royal Netherlands Society of International Law. Professor van Genugten has extensive experience as member or chair of NVAO accreditation panels reviewing programmes in the field of Law.

### ***Prof. dr Ann Skelton, Member***

Ms. Skelton is a lawyer fighting for children's rights in South Africa, taking children's cases to court and writing laws to protect children. She currently directs the Centre for Child Law at the University of Pretoria. Under the presidency of Nelson Mandela, professor Skelton chaired the writing of the new law protecting children in trouble with the law. In 2012, she was awarded the World's Children's Prize for her long and successful fight for the rights of children affected by the justice system. She teaches a Masters course in child law, and is an internationally recognised researcher.

### ***Mr. Joren Selleslaghs MA, Student-member***

Mr. Selleslaghs recently graduated from the College of Europe in Bruges obtaining a master's degree in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies. Before, he studied Political Science and International Relations at VUB and the Université de Corse (bachelor), as well as European Studies at ULB (Master). Joren Selleslaghs regularly participates in NVAO accreditation exercises as student-member.

The panel was assisted by drs. Lisette Winsemius, policy advisor at NVAO, and by the external secretary, Mr. Mark Delmartino MA, MDM Consultancy Antwerp.

All members of the panel and the external secretary completed and signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality.

## Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit

The panel undertook a site visit on 31 October 2014 as part of the external assessment procedure regarding the Master of Laws Advanced Studies International Children's Rights at Leiden University. The meeting took place at the University Faculty Club, Academiegebouw, Rapenburg 79 in Leiden.

### *Agenda:*

- 08.30 Arrival of the panel, welcome and consultation of programme materials
- 09.15 Interview with representatives of the general management
- Professor Rick Lawson, Dean LLS
  - Professor Alex Geert Castermans, Vice-dean LLSI
  - Mr. Dennis Hoitink, Managing director LLS
- 10.30 Interview with the development team and programme management
- Professor Ton Liefwaard, Programme director
  - Professor Julia Sloth-Nielsen, Deputy programme director
  - Ms. Sheena Bruce, General programme co-ordinator
  - Asst. Professor Tanja Masson Zwaan, exam commission member
- 11.45 Lunch and internal panel discussion
- 13.15 Visit of the Leiden Law School building and its facilities
- Ms. Sheena Bruce, General programme co-ordinator
- 14.00 Interview with lecturing staff
- Professor Simone van der Hof, Children's rights and digital technology
  - Professor Titia Loenen, Interaction between children's rights and other international legal systems
  - Professor Marielle Bruning, Child protection and children's rights
  - Professor Peter Rodrigues, Migration and children's rights
  - Ms. Simona Florescu LLM, Academic programme coordinator
- 15.00 Interview with representatives of the professional field
- Ms Tulika Bansal LLM, Advisor, Danish Institute for Human Rights
  - Dr. Sharon Detrick LLM, Programme Manager, ECPAT Nederland
  - Ms. Majorie Kaandorp MA, Children's Rights Officer and Researcher, UNICEF
  - Dr. Jan-Peter Loof, Commissioner, The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights
- 16.00 Interview with the programme management
- Professor Ton Liefwaard, Programme director
  - Professor Julia-Sloth-Nielsen, Deputy programme director
- 16.30 Panel discussion (closed)
- 17.15 Feedback session
- 17.30 End of site visit

## Annex 3: Documents reviewed

### *Programme documents presented by the institution*

Master of Laws Advanced Studies in International Children's Rights, Application for validation of a new programme, Leiden Law School, May 2014, 214 pp including annexes such as subject specific reference framework, outline description of curriculum components, teaching and examination regulations, overview of allocated staff, thesis guidelines, programme comparisons.

### *Documents made available during the site visit*

#### NVAO documentation

- Recent reaccreditation findings – existing advanced studies programmes

#### Quality assurance of advanced studies programmes

- Quality assurance (QA) monitoring cycle
- Examples of minutes from QA standing committee
- Student & alumni questionnaires / exit reports
- Exam Commission Rules
- Exam Commission Duties
- Exam Commission Annual Report
- Advanced Master Annual Report

#### Information on existing advanced studies programmes

- The existing four advanced masters programmes
- The Meaning of the Predicate 'Advanced'
- Organogram of advanced studies programmes within Leiden Law School
- Example of an advanced studies programme course schedule
- Intake statistic 2012
- Advanced Master Programmes Annual Reports

#### Study guidelines provided to advanced studies students / staff

- Course and examination rules and regulations
- Exam grading instructions
- Exam Commission exam review template
- Exam Rules and Regulations for Students
- Rules of Citation for Papers and Thesis
- Plagiarism information
- Thesis Guidelines for Students and Supervisors
- Thesis and paper grading criteria
- Thesis second reader statement
- Presentation checklist
- Example of an Advanced Master course booklet for students pre-reading
- Student guide
- Blue Book
- Library Induction materials

#### Law School services & facilities offered to advanced studies students / graduates

- Pre-sessional English courses
- Careers services
- Careers promotion brochure
- Meijers research institute and graduate school
- Alumni information
- Leiden Leadership Programme

## Annex 4: Learning outcomes

1	<p><b>Basic and overarching knowledge:</b></p> <p>The graduate has profound knowledge of, and insight into the characteristic features of the main international instruments in the field of children's rights as well as of their interrelation. In addition, the graduate has knowledge of the core areas of law of relevance for children and their implications for children's rights implementation.</p>
2	<p><b>Specialist knowledge:</b></p> <p>The graduate has profound knowledge of, and insight into specific areas of law relevant to children's rights. The graduate is able to independently assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current legal framework, the possibilities and limitations in promoting the realisation of children's rights as well as the relationship between children's rights and the rights of other human beings. Further the graduate is able to understand the relationship between international and national laws in the field of children's rights and devise means of further strengthening these rights both in international and local arenas. The graduate has also in-depth knowledge of, and insight into, the roles and responsibilities of different actors (State, parents/legal guardians, communities, civil society and private actors) for the implementation of the rights of the child.</p>
3	<p><b>Research abilities:</b></p> <p>The graduate is capable of researching legal questions in International Children's Rights Law by formulating coherent and concise problem statements, collecting and analysing data, judging their validity and relevance as well as by thorough analysis and interpretation of legal sources, academic literature, and complex cases relating to questions of children's rights law. The graduate is able to critically read and analyse relevant case law and other documents by (international, regional and domestic) bodies active in this field. He/she is able to pose critical questions, formulate an independent opinion, draw founded conclusions, provide innovative solutions to challenges in the field of children's rights, and to make recommendations and suggestions for further research.</p>
4	<p><b>Presentation of knowledge:</b></p> <p>The graduate is capable of presenting his/her findings in a clear, readily understandable, methodical and logical manner, both orally and in writing, to both legal experts and non-lawyers alike. Students will develop and work upon their existing writing, reading and research skills as well as their oral presentation skills. The language in all aspects of study is English. Therefore, English as a professional and working language, using the specific vocabulary of international children rights law, is extensively developed.</p>
5	<p><b>Application of knowledge:</b></p> <p>The graduate is capable of applying the acquired knowledge, research and practical skills in professions or functions that require application of International Children's Rights Law at an advanced master's level. More specifically:</p> <p>a) The graduate possesses the legal knowledge, insight and skills enabling him/her to pursue a career at an advanced level as a legal professional within</p>

	<p>national governments and public administration (both national, regional and international); within the judiciary or policy advisory bodies on issues related to human rights of children; within national, regional and international non-governmental organisations dealing with children's rights; within national human rights institutions (e.g. ombudspersons); and within law firms specialising in human and children's rights, but also in related areas such as corporate social responsibility.</p> <p>b) The graduate possesses legal knowledge, insight and skills qualifying him/her to pursue an academic career by conducting further academic research, e.g. in a PhD programme <i>inter alia</i> the areas of children's rights, human rights law, private international law, family law, child law, juvenile criminal law and migration law.</p>
<b>6</b>	<b><i>Working environment:</i></b>
	The graduate is capable of working both independently and in a team, notably within an international and intercultural environment.
<b>7</b>	<b><i>ICT skills:</i></b>
	<p>The graduate is able to use new, or to enhance existing, ICT skills in research and communication and knows how to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- general legal research databases such as Westlaw and LEXIS NEXIS;</li> <li>- human rights databases such as Hudoc; EurLex; the Inter-American human rights data base; the African human rights law document database;</li> <li>- websites such as the website of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the European Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Court and Commission of Human Rights, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Child Rights International Network (CRIN).</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Keeping up knowledge:</i></b>
	The graduate is capable of keeping up his or her knowledge and abilities in international children's rights (law) by properly using and updating the research skills and sources taught in the programme.

## **Annex 5: List of abbreviations**

EC	European Credits
ICR	International Children's Rights
LLM	Master of Laws
LLS	Leiden Law School
MA	Master of Arts
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders



The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the programme Master of Laws Advanced Studies in International Children's Rights at Leiden University.

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