



B Law in Society
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

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Contents

Summary	4
Score table	5
Introduction.....	6
Procedure.....	6
Panel	7
Information on the programme	8
Description of the assessment.....	9
Organization	9
Recommendations from the previous accreditation panel	9
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	9
Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment.....	11
Standard 3. Student assessment	16
Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes	19
General conclusion	19
Development points	19
Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes	21
Appendix 2. Programme curriculum.....	22
Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit.....	23
Appendix 4. Materials	25

Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The Law in Society (LiS) bachelor's programme at the VU trains students to become legal professionals who can address complex societal challenges in multidisciplinary teams. LiS emphasizes moving between legal disciplines, between a dogmatic legal approach and an empirical or social science approach, and acting in diverse environments. The programme's 'mixed classroom' concept facilitates this through diverse group interactions and self-reflection. The breadth of the programme led the panel to compare it to the liberal arts and sciences, but the legal core of the programme justifies its placement in the Faculty of Law. The panel highly appreciates the distinctive profile of the programme and values the way in which it educates academically minded legal professionals with a critical and socially engaged approach, in line with VU Amsterdam's educational vision and the faculty's 'Law in Action' profile. This ethos is reflected in the intended learning outcomes, which are well aligned with an academic bachelor's level. The programme effectively prepares students to embody an academic citizen, shaping the future through research and societal impact. The panel concludes that the programme effectively prepares students for legal studies or careers, and maintains its relevance through engagement with the legal profession through its advisory board and lecturer network.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that LiS has developed a creative curriculum structured around four socially relevant themes, explored from both global and local legal perspectives, which is well aligned with the programme's vision. The curriculum strongly reflects the Law in Action approach. Four learning trajectories ensure the content and coherence of legal knowledge and skills, empirical research skills, the role of social sciences in legal analysis, and general academic development within the programme. LiS concludes with an individual thesis on a legal topic, supplemented by group empirical research, with adequate supervision.

The curriculum integrates the concept of the 'mixed classroom' through courses on diversity, professional ethics and mediation, together with appropriate formats such as group assignments to enhance learning and teamwork skills. Academic orientation and research skills are well integrated into the curriculum. The selective admissions process ensures that students understand LiS as a specialized law programme. The panel supports how selection on the basis of motivation supports the mixed classroom concept, but recommends that the transparency of the selection criteria for prospective students be improved by clearly identifying relevant motivational factors and defining the type of mixed classroom experience sought.

Information about the programme, personal development and future opportunities is sufficiently provided by the PPI programme and study advisors. The choice of English as the programme language is logical and necessary given the international focus. The teaching staff is competent in both content and didactics, has additional training in mixed classroom teaching and is able to teach in English. The panel considers the relatively high number of SKOs achieved to be an advantage for the programme.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel praises the thorough design of assessment policy and practice in the bachelor's programme. LiS uses varied and appropriate tests. The panel is positive about the standardization and archiving of tests through assessment dossiers. It notes that lecturers have a lot of freedom in designing tests, and decide whether changes should be made to the test format, for instance, when the use of language models necessitates adjustments. The panel recommends the programme and faculty to provide more guidance in this area. According to the panel, the assessment of the final level is well designed. The thesis assessment

form is insightful, partly due to the space for qualitative feedback and explanations. The panel has a recommendation to review the weighting of sub-criteria. The Examination Board (EB) fulfils its assurance role and is proactive in doing so. The panel does recommend the EB to organize formal consultations with the programme management more often, to ensure a structural discussion about assessment quality.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Having interviewed alumni and reviewed a selection of recent bachelor theses, the panel concludes that Law in Society students are achieving the intended learning outcomes. The theses consistently meet, and in some cases exceed, bachelor level expectations. Graduates show a strong willingness to continue at master's level and generally feel well prepared for further study.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Bachelor's programme Law in Society

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

General conclusion	positive
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Em. prof. mr. Tineke Cleiren, chair
Date: 16 July 2024

Dr. Irene Conradie, panel secretary

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 7, 8 and 9 February 2024, the bachelor's programme Law in Society of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam was assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment Law 1. The assessment cluster consisted of 33 programmes, offered by Erasmus University Rotterdam, Nyenrode Business University, University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (September 2018).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster Law 1. Fiona Schouten acted as coordinator and panel secretary. Irene Conradie, Peter Hilderling, Mariette Huisjes and Jessica van Rossum also acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment. They have been certified and registered by the NVAO. Before the VU site visit, Fiona Schouten was secretary for the bachelor's and master's programmes in Law, the master's programme in Tax Law and the master's programme in International Business Law. Irene Conradie was secretary for the Notarial Law bachelor's and master's programmes, the Law in Society bachelor's programme and the Law and Politics of International Security master's programme.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster. On 2 January 2024, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chair on her role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The organizers at the Faculty of Law composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see appendix 3). The faculty selected representative partners for the various interviews. It also determined that the development dialogue would take place after the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programme provided the coordinator with a list of graduates over the academic year 2022-2023 (between February and October 2023). In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses of the programme. They took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account. Prior to the site visit, the programme provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. It also provided the panel with the self-evaluation report and additional materials (see Appendix 4).

The panel members studied the information and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and remarks in a document and shared this with the panel members. In a preliminary meeting, the panel discussed the initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment frameworks, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

Site visit

During the site visit, the panel interviewed various programme representatives (see Appendix 3). The panel also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation

hour. No consultation was requested. The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the preliminary findings.

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the Faculty of Law in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalized the report, and the coordinator sent it to the Faculty of Law of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Panel

The following panel members were involved in the cluster assessment:

- Em. prof. mr. C.P.M. (Tineke) Cleiren, emeritus professor of Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure at Leiden University (chair);
- Prof. dr. E. (Elisabeth) Alofs, professor of Family law, matrimonial property law and inheritance law at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. J.N. (Jan) Bouwman, professor of Tax Law at the University of Groningen;
- Prof. mr. dr. L.H.J. (Maurice) Adams, professor of General Jurisprudence at Tilburg University;
- Prof. dr. M.M.T.A. (Marcel) Brus, professor of Public International Law at the University of Groningen;
- Em. prof. dr. H.E.G.S. (Hildegard) Schneider, emeritus professor of European Law at Maastricht University;
- Prof. mr. dr. S.E. (Steven) Bartels, professor of Private Law at Radboud University;
- Prof. dr. R.A. (Ramses) Wessel, professor of European Law at the University of Groningen;
- Prof. dr. I.J.J. (Irene) Burgers, professor of International and European tax law, and Economics of Taxation at the University of Groningen;
- Prof. dr. mr. T. (Ton) Liefwaard, professor of Children's Rights at Leiden University;
- N. (Noor) Kikken BSc., bachelor's student Tax Law (Fiscaal Recht) at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (student member);
- D. (David) de Wit, bachelor's student Law (Rechtsgeleerdheid) at the University van Amsterdam (student member);
- T. (Tuncay) Yazar, master's student Constitutional and Administrative Law (Staats- en Bestuursrecht), and Labour Law (Arbeidsrecht), at the University van Amsterdam (student member);
- Prof. mr. dr. W.D. (Wilbert) Kolkman, professor of Family Property Law at the University of Groningen (referee);
- Mr. dr. I.M. (Martje) Boekema, assistant professor of Constitutional, Administrative Law and Legal Theory at Utrecht University (referee);
- Mr. dr. J.M. (Jens) Iverson, assistant professor of International Law at Leiden University (referee);
- Prof. mr. dr. A.M. (Aline) Klingenberg, professor of IT Law at the University of Groningen (referee);
- Mr. dr. W.G.M. (Willem) Plessen, associate professor (emeritus) of Labour Law at Tilburg University (referee);
- Mr. M.F. (Melita) van der Mersch, partner and Health Law lawyer at Velink & De Die Lawyers (referee);
- Dr. S.F.W. (Steffie) van den Bosch LL.M., assistant professor of Private, Business and Labour Law at Tilburg University (referee);
- Mr. dr. E.G.D. (Emanuel) van Dongen LL.M., associate professor of Private, Accountability and Liability Law at Utrecht University (referee);

- Prof. dr. S.A.C.M. (Saskia) Lavrijssen, professor of Economic Regulation and Market Governance of Network Industries at Tilburg University (referee);
- Prof. mr. dr. A.C. (Aart) Hendriks, professor of Health Law at Leiden University (referee);
- Em. prof. mr. D.F.M.M. (Niek) Zaman, emeritus professor of Notarial Corporate Law at Leiden University and advisor at Loyens & Loeff N.V. (referee);
- Mr. dr. S.N. (Simone) de Valk, assistant professor in Labour Law at the University of Groningen (referee);
- Mr. dr. M.D.J. (Matthijs) van der Wulp, assistant professor in Tax law and Fiscal Economy at Tilburg University (referee);
- Mr. dr. W. (Walter) Dijkshoorn, senior lawyer at the Directie Bestuursrechtspraak of the Council of State (Raad van State) (referee).

The panel assessing the bachelor's programme Law in Society at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam consisted of the following members:

- Em. prof. mr. C.P.M. (Tineke) Cleiren, emeritus professor of Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure at Leiden University (chair);
- Prof. dr. E. (Elisabeth) Alofs, professor of Family law, matrimonial property law and inheritance law at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. J.N. (Jan) Bouwman, professor of Tax Law at the University of Groningen;
- Prof. mr. dr. L.H.J. (Maurice) Adams, professor of General Jurisprudence at Tilburg University;
- Prof. dr. R.A. (Ramses) Wessel, professor of European Law at the University of Groningen;
- D. (David) de Wit, bachelor's student Law (Rechtsgeleerdheid) at the University van Amsterdam (student member);
- Prof. mr. dr. W.D. (Wilbert) Kolkman, professor of Family Property Law at the University of Groningen (referee);
- Mr. dr. E.G.D. (Emanuel) van Dongen LL.M., associate professor of Private, Accountability and Liability Law at Utrecht University (referee);
- Prof. dr. S.A.C.M. (Saskia) Lavrijssen, professor of Economic Regulation and Market Governance of Network Industries at Tilburg University (referee).

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive
Programme name:	Law in Society
CROHO number:	59334
Level:	Bachelor
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	180 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	-
Location:	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	English
Submission date NVAO:	1 November 2024

Description of the assessment

Organization

The bachelor's programme Law in Society (LiS) is one of twelve programmes organized by the Faculty of Law of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam). The LiS programme is overseen by two directors, supported by a vice director (programme coordinator), who collectively form the programme board. The programme directors are functionally accountable to the faculty portfolio holder Education and are responsible for the curriculum, including the quality assurance of the associated tests, the organization of education (study guide and feasibility) and the functioning of the quality assurance cycle of the programme (course and curriculum evaluations, mid-term reviews and assessments). The programme falls under a faculty-wide examination committee and has its own programme committee.

Recommendations from the previous accreditation panel

During the previous accreditation, the panel formulated four recommendations. The first recommendation, to specify in course descriptions which national legal systems are studied, has been partially implemented. For example, the programme states that in criminology courses, readings and discussions are mainly drawn from the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom, while in other courses there is no focus on specific national systems and examples from different countries are used. While the panel understands that the thematic approach, which examines general legal foundations and principles, is effective in practice, it advises keeping an eye on how the promised global perspective is realized. However, the panel does not see this limited follow-up as a shortcoming in the basic quality of the educational learning environment.

The second recommendation, to emphasize human rights and constitutionally protected fundamental rights, is adequately addressed by the programme through courses such as Terrorism (Year 1), Global Migration Governance (Year 2) and Recap: Public Law (Year 3).

The third recommendation concerns better integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the course material across the various individual courses, in order to provide students with tools for their everyday reality. The current panel acknowledges the concern raised by the previous panel that the Artificial Intelligence course (6 ECs) should not be strictly limited to the Sustainability theme. The social sciences trajectory involves collaboration between faculty members from the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Science to broaden students' understanding of core AI methods, including big data, machine learning and text processing. In addition, the course explores the relationship between AI and law, teaching students how to critically evaluate key AI applications in law, considering their social and ethical implications. This interdisciplinary approach is consistent with the view that AI education should go beyond the confines of the Sustainability theme, as advocated by the previous panel.

Under Standard 3, it is further explained that the fourth recommendation regarding a possible overload of written assessment forms does not pose a problem. The panel concludes that the programme has generally addressed the previous recommendations adequately.

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings

Vision and profile

The English-language bachelor's programme Law in Society (LiS) at VU Amsterdam is designed to develop legal professionals who can work in multidisciplinary teams to address complex societal challenges. These challenges are grouped into four themes: Security, Globalization of Markets, Migration, and Sustainability. The programme emphasizes three key abilities:

1. Shifting between legal disciplines;
2. Shifting between a legal dogmatic approach and an empirical or social scientific approach; and
3. Acting in a diverse environment.

LiS embodies VU Amsterdam's educational vision through a curriculum centred on global societal themes, emphasizing responsibility and diversity. It offers a broad legal education, drawing upon social scientific observations or insights as needed, fostering multidisciplinary collaboration, ethics, critical thinking and analytical skills. The programme employs the 'mixed classroom' concept to develop competencies in intercultural interaction and negotiation through diverse group interactions and self-reflection. The multidisciplinary, inclusive approach to the core themes, considered at global and local levels, encourages engagement and diverse perspectives. In doing so, LiS supports the faculty's 'Law in Action' profile and the VU's educational vision of developing committed, conscientious academics who push boundaries, contribute responsibly to society, and understand their role as academic citizens shaping the future.

According to the panel, the programme's vision and profile are clearly articulated, uniquely formulated and highly original in bringing a rich legal, dogmatic perspective to multilevel societal problems. It considers the LiS bachelor's programme distinctive in that it embodies the concept of Law in Action, understood not only as practical law, but rather as asking how law is made to work in practice. This is realized through empirical methodologies alongside global and local themes. The bachelor's programme is so comprehensive that it prompted comparisons with a liberal arts and sciences programme by the panel, but the programme management argued effectively that its solid legal foundation justified its position within the Faculty of Law, which includes the empirically oriented field of criminology.

Intended learning outcomes

The programme's objectives have been translated into fifteen intended learning outcomes (ILOs). An alignment overview substantiates that they comply with the Dublin descriptors at the bachelor's level (see Appendix 1 for the ILOs), where at least two ILOs are formulated for each of the five dimensions. The panel considers the learning outcomes to be detailed and pertinently grouped into subject-specific, academic, social and communication ILOs, and ILOs on study skills and professional orientation. The ILOs meet the requirements of the legal discipline. Graduates with a bachelor's degree in law typically pursue further studies, and a LiS degree offers graduates numerous options for related further study. The learning outcomes of LiS are closely aligned with the admission requirements for VU Amsterdam's international master programmes: International Business Law, International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology, and Law and Politics of International Security. Additionally, they align with the English Law tracks, including European and International Law, International Technology Law, and International Migration and Refugee Law. Graduates can also opt for (selective) master's programmes at other Dutch universities, including Criminology. Those with Dutch language skills and a 60 EC package of additional courses in Dutch law are eligible for several LLM programmes, and can thus meet the requirements for the 'robed professions' (judge, lawyer or public prosecutor) in combination with an appropriate graduate programme. The panel concludes,

after reviewing a faculty overview, that the LiS programme, with the additional courses, meets the requirements set forth by the 'Convenant civiel effect'.

The programme has recently established its own Advisory Board, comprised of three members with expertise in different areas of law, including one alumnus of the programme. The board advises on, among other things, the alignment of the intended learning outcomes with the profession and the specifics of the legal (skills) training provided. The panel appreciates how LiS engages with the legal profession through its advisory board and lecturer network to keep the programme relevant and up to date.

Considerations

The Law in Society bachelor's programme trains students to become legal professionals who can address complex societal challenges in multidisciplinary teams. LiS emphasizes moving between legal disciplines, between a dogmatic legal approach and an empirical or social science approach, and acting in diverse environments. The programme's 'mixed classroom' concept facilitates this through diverse group interactions and self-reflection. The breadth of the programme led the panel to compare it to the liberal arts and sciences, but the legal core of the programme justifies its placement in the Faculty of Law. The panel highly appreciates the distinctive profile of the programme and values the way in which it educates academically minded legal professionals with a critical and socially engaged approach, in line with VU Amsterdam's educational vision and the faculty's 'Law in Action' profile. This ethos is reflected in the intended learning outcomes, which are well aligned with an academic bachelor's level. The programme effectively prepares students to embody an academic citizen, shaping the future through research and societal impact. The panel concludes that the programme effectively prepares students for legal studies or careers, and maintains its relevance through engagement with the legal profession through its advisory board and lecturer network.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 1.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings

Curriculum

The three-year Law in Society programme (180 EC) critically examines major issues and social problems from a national, European and international legal perspective. The academic year is divided into two semesters, each of which consists of three consecutive periods of eight, eight and four weeks. Each term ends with an examination week.

The first two years of the programme focus on four specific themes: Security, Globalisation of Markets, Migration and Sustainability. Each semester focuses on one of these themes, explored both locally and globally through courses that integrate legal disciplines with social sciences. These issues are analysed from a variety of perspectives, providing students with a broad understanding of complex social situations.

The curriculum is structured around these themes, with courses addressing current global social issues and legal perspectives. The programme emphasizes practical learning, preparing students for real-world

challenges in law and society by engaging with legal and social science disciplines to develop skills and knowledge in different areas of law.

The curriculum of the programme comprises four learning trajectories and a Personal and Professional Identity (PPI) pathway (see under Student guidance below):

- Law, legal sciences and related skills (66 EC): Courses integrate core legal elements and disciplines, combining global and local perspectives.
- Empirical research skills (24 EC): Students learn empirical research methods progressively over four courses, culminating in the ability to design and conduct empirical studies.
- Social sciences (24 EC): Students explore the role of the social sciences in legal analysis and resolution, covering topics such as criminology, psychology, sociology and artificial intelligence.
- General academic development (30 EC): Students develop essential academic skills through courses on diversity, philosophy of law, negotiation, mediation, dispute resolution, ethics and sustainability.

In the third year, students undertake a 30 EC minor or an international exchange in the first semester to gain additional expertise. Relevant minors include 'Law and Global Justice: Climate, Internet and Migration' and 'Technology, Law & Ethics', in line with the 'Law in Action' profile. Students also have the opportunity to include preparatory components for the 'Civiel effect' through the minor. In the second semester, students take three more in-depth recap courses (18 EC) that review the learning trajectory Law, legal sciences and related skills. This ensures adequate coverage of the three traditional legal disciplines: public, private and criminal law. The programme culminates in the Bachelor's thesis (12 EC), in which students apply theoretical and empirical knowledge to legal and societal issues. Under the supervision of experienced researchers, students conduct small-scale empirical studies, write legal opinions and present their findings at a symposium.

The panel noted several distinctive features of the LiS bachelor's curriculum. One notable aspect is its thematic structure, which differs from traditional undergraduate law programmes. The panel considers the topics covered in LiS relevant, reflecting current societal challenges. LiS begins with thematic modules that gradually build up to a comprehensive review or 'recap' towards the end of the programme. Despite initial doubts about placing the recap courses in the third year, the site visit convinced the panel that this approach made sense, given that the aim of LiS is to train lawyers to understand the interactions between different areas of law and to encourage them to think creatively and expansively beyond conventional boundaries. Another key feature is the programme's multidisciplinary approach, which emphasizes experiential learning ('learning by doing') across different disciplines. LiS adopts a problem-based learning approach, with a clear focus on the basic legal knowledge that is essential for students. As part of a Senior Teaching Qualification (SKO) project, the development and coherence of legal knowledge and skills in the curriculum have been better aligned.

Overall, the curriculum of the programme is creatively structured to align with the educational vision and profile, demonstrating strong multidisciplinary through clustering in the learning trajectories. The four learning trajectories, each led by a coordinator, and the clustering of courses within these trajectories are logically and consistently organized. All learning outcomes are covered in the curricula. Additionally, the programme has actively enhanced course coherence based on ongoing evaluations and student input. The panel heard from students that they would like to see a stronger connection with the legal field in non-law courses. While this feedback is being addressed through the introduction of more legally focused assignments, the more legal aspects could perhaps be addressed more from the outset, rather than at the end of the curriculum. The programme has also invested in an optional 'Civiel Effect Summer School' for

students who wish to obtain the Dutch qualification for legal practice by taking additional courses to the regular Bachelor of Law programme. The panel supports these developments.

In the panel's view, the educational approach is innovative and refreshing, tailored to the vision and objectives of the programme. The link with the Law in Action concept is strongly reflected in the curriculum, which revolves around addressing societal challenges. The concept of the 'mixed classroom' is implemented throughout the curriculum and includes a diversity course in the first year to familiarize students with mixed classrooms, a professional ethics course, and a mediation course. To develop learning and teamwork skills, almost all courses include group assignments with varying team compositions. Students are generally enthusiastic about the mixed classroom approach and the courses pay attention to personal experiences and perspectives. Some students would like the mixed classroom approach to be made more explicit, as the extent to which it is incorporated varies from one lecturer to another. The teaching methods are aligned with the vision and profile, exemplified by original approaches like the group-based research setup, the empirical component of the thesis, and the poster presentation, among others. Teaching also integrates assessment, motivating students with formative teaching and learning, such as group work, to thoroughly prepare for final exams. Courses match teaching and assessment methods to learning objectives, such as computer-based work in Statistics & SPSS and field research in Qualitative Research Methods. The panel also notes that a large number of students participate in the honours programme, indicating the high quality, engagement, commitment, and ambitions of the students in this programme.

During the site visit, the panel discussed the relationship between academic research and teaching within the programme. The LiS programme is based on the research of its faculty members. The creation of the programme was driven by the lecturers' wish to establish a different type of legal education. The programme also benefits from the presence of criminologists within the same faculty, which fosters interdisciplinary collaboration and enhances the programme's offerings. The LiS programme trains students in the research methodology and ethics of empirical research in legal and social sciences. In the General academic development trajectory, students reflect on their social responsibility in an international legal context in courses such as 'Philosophy of Law and Security' and 'Ethics and Sustainability'. Finally, students conduct a small-scale supervised research project in their thesis. Based on this, the panel concludes that academic orientation and research skills are well embedded in the curriculum.

Admission, feasibility and student guidance

The LiS programme attracts approximately 100 Dutch and international students per year with diverse backgrounds, an international orientation and academic ambitions. LiS has no fixed cap on student numbers and has seen consistent application rates, with a balanced mix of Dutch and international applicants, although this was affected by pandemic-related shifts. Cohorts perform consistently well, with around 90% receiving positive Binding Study Advice (BSA) and low dropout rates. Limited performance data is available for this young programme, but the data do not give cause for concern. Of the first cohort in 2019, 71% graduated within four years.

Applicants must hold a Dutch VWO diploma or equivalent and demonstrate proficiency in English and mathematics. The NVAO has granted the request for additional admission requirements ('Protocol toetsing aanvullende eisen bij toelating vanwege onderwijsconcept' (NVAO, 2014/2022) to focus on assessing the international profile and motivation of the students and to support the mixed classroom approach. The current panel notes that it was not immediately clear how mixed classroom was used in the selection process, as it encompasses both a subject and a method. 'Mixed classroom' can refer to the topic of diversity and inclusion in education, and to a specific teaching method using different teaching tools and techniques. It is now understood that the letters and interviews do assess motivation to study law in the context of a

mixed classroom context, thus supporting this teaching method. A mixed classroom does not necessarily have to be an international classroom, although international diversity contributes to a wider range of perspectives. The diversity of the student body enhances collaboration and understanding between students and staff, demonstrating a strong understanding of the challenges of internationalization and effective responses. While the selection process ensures that students understand LiS as a specialized law programme, it remains important to highlight the specific law-in-context approach to prospective students. The panel supports the programme's approach, emphasizing the importance of motivation over nationality to ensure legal compliance and student-centred selection. It does recommend increasing the transparency of selection criteria for prospective students by clearly identifying relevant motivational factors and defining the type of mixed classroom experience sought.

The PPI track plays a pivotal role in providing study guidance and fostering social cohesion for students. Two years ago, the bachelor's programme introduced the Personal and Professional Identity (PPI) track, following the example of the criminology programmes within the same faculty. PPI aims to encourage student engagement, provide insight into the curriculum, enhance study skills and prepare students for the future. Students participate in group sessions and individual coaching sessions to encourage reflection on their academic progress and to make informed choices within the curriculum, with the aim of promoting greater responsibility and ownership of their learning process. The panel notes with appreciation that the PPI programme is in the process of being adapted to the needs of its students; revisions have been made to the first year and efforts are underway to integrate a labour market orientation in the second year. The programme tries to facilitate a lot within PPI, but sometimes wants to temper the expectations of eager students by emphasizing that not everything has to be done immediately. Students interviewed by the panel found PPI beneficial to their development. While PPI is still developing, the panel notes that the programme as a whole is sensitive to the context of LiS students and effectively engages and prepares students for their development after the bachelor's degree.

The panel concludes that the programme is clearly feasible. The support, information and guidance provided are adequate and appreciated by the students. Students found the lectures helpful in preparing for exams, with manageable reading and a balanced workload, with sufficient guidance throughout the learning process. Students receive additional guidance when writing their final work, the bachelor's thesis. The thesis requires students to address socially relevant legal problems in an academic way, and to conduct a small-scale scientific empirical study to complement their legal analysis. In advance, students receive the thesis course manual as well as the list of available thesis topics and corresponding supervisors. They can submit their preferred topics, after which they will be assigned a topic as a group of approximately five students. The Bachelor's Thesis course includes lectures and group and individual meetings with a thesis supervisor. The course builds on previous learning and involves group empirical research. Each group of students works together on their empirical component and is also expected to present a poster at a staff organized symposium. Students independently gather literature, write a legal opinion and analyse empirical data for their individual thesis.

In addition to this programme-specific guidance, there is a broader faculty structure. Study advisors provide information, advice and guidance to students on study-related issues and/or problems and personal circumstances that may affect their studies. This includes practical matters related to studying with a functional disability, complementing the provisions in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) and the information provided by the Infopoint Studying with a Functional Disability (SMF) regarding studying at the VU and campus accessibility. If necessary, the study advisor will refer students to other forms of help or advice, either within or outside the VU. The faculty-wide Career Services department links students, faculty,

alumni and the business community. Students can turn to Career Services for all their career-related questions.

Language and internationalization

The international focus of the programme is reflected in the language of instruction, the content, the international staff, and the significant enrolment of international students. Over the past three years, international students have made up more than half of the student body. The panel discussed the choice for English as the programme language as well as the English language name with LiS stakeholders and agrees that this is a logical and necessary choice given the international focus. The use of English in the LiS programme enhances the quality and thus the achievement of the intended learning outcomes by facilitating a diverse, international exchange of perspectives and expertise, which supports the mixed classroom approach. It also fits in with the use of global themes and the English-language academic literature on these themes. The international focus appeals to those seeking a broad legal approach to societal issues and enhances their employability in international organizations.

Teaching staff

The programme has an experienced teaching staff consisting of established researchers actively engaged in relevant professional practice. The various areas of expertise are well represented. Approximately 80% of the teaching staff have a PhD and all supervisors have sufficient research experience to assess bachelor's theses. Interdisciplinary collaboration is supported by the Criminology department and specific master's programmes, which facilitate close collaboration between lecturers from different disciplines. Lecturers are full or associate professors, almost all of whom have Basic Teaching Qualifications (BKO), and junior lecturers are enrolled on the BKO course. In recent years, an increasing number of lecturers have completed the Senior Teaching Qualification (SKO). There are now nine in total, with one more in training. The co-directors of the programme all hold an SKO. One SKO project has resulted in an 'Inspiration Guide for Law in Society Teachers' and one of the co-directors won the university-wide 'VU Teacher of the Year 2022 Award'.

The programme adopts a mixed classroom approach to teaching, fostering cohesive collaboration between teachers and students and emphasizing international, multicultural and multidisciplinary teamwork. Teachers participate in the Mixed Classroom in Practice programme offered by the VU Centre for Teaching & Learning to develop the necessary skills. All teaching staff are proficient in spoken and written English at C1 level, supported by initiatives such as the 'Professional English' course. These efforts ensure effective communication and delivery within the programme.

The panel concludes that the LiS teaching staff are highly qualified to teach on the programme. They have sound expertise in a range of legal and social science areas, an adequate command of English, proven pedagogical skills, including for the mixed classroom approach, and links to research and practice. Students value the expertise, commitment and approachability of the teaching staff. The panel recognizes that lecturers appreciate their involvement in the programme and working with the motivated students it attracts. It considers the relatively high number of SKOs achieved a strength of the programme.

Considerations

The panel concludes that LiS has developed a creative curriculum structured around four socially relevant themes, explored from both global and local legal perspectives, which is well aligned with the programme's vision. The curriculum strongly reflects the Law in Action approach. Four learning trajectories ensure the content and coherence of legal knowledge and skills, empirical research skills, the role of social sciences in legal analysis, and general academic development within the programme. LiS concludes with an individual thesis on a legal topic, supplemented by group empirical research, with adequate supervision.

The curriculum integrates the concept of the 'mixed classroom' through courses on diversity, professional ethics and mediation, together with appropriate formats such as group assignments to enhance learning and teamwork skills. Academic orientation and research skills are well integrated into the curriculum. The selective admissions process ensures that students understand LiS as a specialized law programme. The panel supports how selection on the basis of motivation supports the mixed classroom concept, but recommends that the transparency of the selection criteria for prospective students be improved by clearly identifying relevant motivational factors and defining the type of mixed classroom experience sought.

Information about the programme, personal development and future opportunities is sufficiently provided by the PPI programme and study advisors. The choice of English as the programme language is logical and necessary given the international focus. The teaching staff is competent in both content and didactics, has additional training in mixed classroom teaching and is able to teach in English. The panel considers the relatively high number of SKOs achieved to be an advantage for the programme.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment policy and system

Assessment in the LiS programme follows the assessment policy of VU Amsterdam. It relates to the VU Educational Vision (2021) and the VU Assessment Policy (2022) and is described in the Handbook Educational Quality – VU Assessment Framework 2019. At faculty level, these policies have been translated into the *Nota Toetsbeleid* (September 2022). According to this document, tests must meet criteria regarding validity of content and understanding, reliability, and transparency. The programme has an assessment plan that sets out the rationale behind the mix of testing and assessment methods selected. The assessment plan shows how the learning objectives of each course are assessed and how these objectives align with the ILOs. Teaching and assessment are carried out, evaluated and recorded in a course-specific assessment dossier. The faculty collects these assessment dossiers centrally. While this system is still under development within the faculty, LiS management proactively implemented it. The LiS programme board reviews assessment dossiers for completeness and quality, and assesses compliance with specific requirements. The co-directors discuss student evaluations with the course coordinators for possible improvements, including assessment methods and teaching styles. The programme committee also considers student feedback, liaising with the programme board as necessary.

LiS uses a variety of assessment methods to monitor students' progress and inform their development (formative) and to ensure alignment with course objectives and programme outcomes (summative). Exams assess knowledge and understanding, while papers assess analytical and writing skills. Research projects and the thesis assess research skills. Oral skills are assessed through (group) presentations, moot courts and discussions. In keeping with the educational vision of the programme, there is a greater emphasis on group work and problem-based assignments, such as drafting a case brief in the Defamation and Assault course or pleading in a moot court exercise in Recap: Criminal Law. Assessments are designed by course coordinators using the principles of constructive alignment and peer review, taking into account input from assessment

plans and previous evaluations. Written and oral assignments are assessed on the basis of criteria that have been made known to the student in advance. Feedback is provided in various ways and at various moments, and all course coordinators organize feedback sessions.

The panel discussed the use of take-home exams during the site visit due to concerns about the illicit use of language models such as ChatGPT. It was informed that these technologies are being more consciously integrated into assessments, with guidance given to students on responsible use, including during thesis work, and lecturers coordinating their efforts. The panel welcomed the programme's focus on AI-generated content. The faculty is aware of the increasing impact of language models such as ChatGPT. At the moment, it is left up to individual teaching staff members to decide how to adapt their tests when this seems necessary in view of these recent developments. The VU is preparing central frameworks to regulate the use of generative AI in education and signal possible pitfalls. The VU Centre for Teaching & Learning is currently preparing a customized course for the faculty on AI applications.

The panel asked specifically about student workload in relation to written assignments, following the recommendation of the previous panel to pay attention to this. Students from previous years had sometimes experienced unequal examination pressure, but also noted that the programme had responded well to feedback, resulting in a better distribution of assignments. The panel was pleased to hear from students that the assessment workload required time management but was now more balanced and manageable.

The panel agrees well with the way in which assessment and assessment policy are designed in the bachelor's programme. It notes that assessment is varied and appropriate. Through mechanisms and means such as the principle of dual control, rubrics or answer models and the use of an assessment plan and templates, the programme guarantees that assessment is sufficiently clear and transparent. The panel is positive about the standardization and archiving of tests via assessment dossiers. The panel observes that lecturers have a lot of freedom in designing tests, and that they decide whether changes should be made to the test format, for instance when the use of language models makes changes necessary. The panel recommends the programme and the faculty to provide more guidance here, so that lecturers do not have to reinvent the wheel themselves and know what is acceptable within the faculty.

Thesis assessment

The supervision and assessment process of the bachelor's thesis is outlined in the Course Manual Thesis Law in Society. The panel finds the format, which includes an individual thesis (90%) and group work in the form of a poster presenting empirical research (10%), to be original and well-suited to the learning outcomes. The thesis is assessed by (at least) two independent examiners. The first examiner is also the thesis supervisor. The final version of the thesis is submitted to a second examiner who makes an independent assessment. The first and second examiners meet to justify their assessments and determine the grade. To increase transparency, both examiners record their assessments individually on the assessment form. In case of significant disagreement (one point or more), it is customary for the thesis coordinator to appoint a third examiner. Usually this will lead to a consensus. If not, the thesis coordinator may involve the examination board to reach a decision. The assessment is usually discussed with the student in a final meeting at which the supervisor explains how the final grade was arrived at. The panel acknowledges the adequacy of the assessment process: the manual outlines the process and criteria, the process employs the dual principle with an additional reviewer from another department, it includes a plagiarism check, and utilizes a detailed assessment form.

Assessment of the theses is carried out using standardized online assessment forms on which the assessment criteria are clearly stated. The assessment form contains three components: content (core of the

assessment), academic writing, and effort and creativity. The supervisor scores the different subcomponents ('Do the methods used fit the research question?'), whereas the second assessor fills in a written explanation. The panel noticed that assessors make use of this space in practice. The panel feels that criteria such as 'satisfactory', 'moderate' and 'insufficient' should be better defined, especially in the absence of rubrics. The weighing of subcomponents in determining the final grade is not always transparent. The panel observed that other programmes within the faculty use a different scale, such as the Master of Laws programme. It recommends enhancing consistency and transparency by adopting best practices, as committed to by the faculty. Additionally, the panel noted significant differences in the length of studied theses; the guidelines specify a length of 6000-8000 words, but this is not reflected in the assessment form. The panel advises addressing this also during the revision of the assessment form.

Examination Board

The bachelor's programme falls under a faculty-wide Examination Board (EB). This Board is responsible for ensuring the quality of examinations. The EB periodically reviews the programme's assessment plan to determine whether assessment methods match the learning objectives they test, and whether these objectives are sufficiently in line with the learning outcomes of the programme. The results of this evaluation are recorded in writing and sent to the programme management. The EB also periodically checks whether the assessment dossiers are present, correct and complete. The EB holds periodic consultations with the management of the programme. Written exams are increasingly created digitally, using Testvision assessment software. After completing the evaluation of the examination, this programme offers an analysis of each test item. The outcome of the analysis is recorded in writing and discussed with the responsible examiners.

The EB annually ensures the reliability of thesis assessment by means of a sample from the thesis database. It reads theses without any knowledge of the accompanying assessment form and marginally assesses them on criteria such as problem definition justification, method, structure, use of sources and argumentation. The grade obtained is then compared with the grade given by the supervisors and if there is a difference of more than 1 point, the assessment form is reviewed for possible explanations. If no explanation is found, the EB consults with the supervisor or course coordinator with the aim of improving the thesis assessment.

The panel noted that the EB adequately performs its quality assurance task through quality checks on courses and final theses. Panel and EB discussed the EB's assurance policies and practices. The panel concluded that the EB is well embedded in faculty quality assurance systems and proactively contributes to discussion around current issues, such as language models. The EB discontinued its initial sampling of assessment dossiers in the academic year 2022-2023 when it found that their completion was not yet up to standard in all programmes and urged programmes to prioritize the completion of dossiers. The panel does recommend that the EB organize more frequent formal consultations with the programme management to ensure that there is a structural conversation about assessment quality. The EB now functions quite autonomously, and the panel sees opportunities to achieve more coordination and keep a finger on the pulse of current developments in the programme.

Considerations

The panel praises the thorough design of assessment policy and practice in the bachelor's programme. LiS uses varied and appropriate tests. The panel is positive about the standardization and archiving of tests through assessment dossiers. It notes that lecturers have a lot of freedom in designing tests, and decide whether changes should be made to the test format, for instance, when the use of language models necessitates adjustments. The panel recommends the programme and faculty to provide more guidance in this area. According to the panel, the assessment of the final level is well designed. The thesis assessment

form is insightful, partly due to the space for qualitative feedback and explanations. The panel has a recommendation to review the weighting of sub-criteria. The Examination Board fulfils its assurance role and is proactive in doing so. The panel does recommend the EB to organize formal consultations with the programme management more often, to ensure a structural discussion about assessment quality.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Prior to the site visit, the panel examined a sample of fifteen recently completed theses. During this review, the panel assessed the intended learning outcomes and the standards set by the programme. Without exception, all the theses examined were at the level expected of bachelor students. The panel noted that although the empirical component in some of the theses reviewed was modest, students had demonstrated throughout the programme that they were able to undertake both legal and empirical research. Furthermore, the panel recognized several theses of high quality and appreciated the diversity and relevance of the topics and research questions chosen.

The LiS programme has seen the majority of its graduates continue their education, with many pursuing master's programmes in law or criminology at the VU Amsterdam and beyond. The programme keeps track of its alumni through its LinkedIn page, and many LiS alumni are proud ambassadors for the programme. The alumni interviewed appreciated the problem-based learning and the integration of academic, legal and empirical perspectives. They found that this approach helped them to better understand traditional law master's courses from a practical and problem-solving perspective.

Considerations

Having interviewed alumni and reviewed a selection of recent bachelor theses, the panel concludes that Law in Society students are achieving the intended learning outcomes. The theses consistently meet, and in some cases exceed, bachelor level expectations. Graduates show a strong willingness to continue at master's level and generally feel well prepared for further study.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel's assessment of the bachelor's programme Law in Society is positive.

Development points

1. Increase the transparency of selection criteria for prospective students by clearly identifying relevant motivational factors and defining the type of mixed classroom experience sought.
2. Review the assessment categories and weighting of subcomponents on the thesis assessment form with other programmes within the faculty.

3. Ensure that faculty and programme management provide more guidance in determining and changing assessment types, for example when taking the use of language models such as ChatGPT into account. Provide programme and faculty frameworks that support lecturers in such choices.
4. Organize more frequent formal consultation between the Examination Board and the programme management to ensure a structural discussion about assessment quality.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

A. Subject-specific learning outcomes.

The graduate has:

1. academic knowledge and understanding of the key principles and system structure of (European and international) public, private and criminal law, to include recent developments
2. academic knowledge and understanding of legal philosophy and of different legal cultural traditions
3. academic knowledge and understanding of the relationship between European and international law on the one hand, and the legal systems of individual states on the other
4. academic knowledge and understanding at a basic level of relevant social sciences (criminology, psychology, sociology and artificial intelligence)
5. academic knowledge and understanding at a basic level of the research methodology and ethics of empirical research in legal and social sciences

B. Academic learning outcomes

The graduate is able to:

1. read, understand, analyse, interpret and reflect upon legal texts (including jurisprudence and legislation), as well as academic publications relating to the social sciences
2. articulate multilevel societal problems in terms of different legal fields, and think through the (legal) consequences of the adoption of different legal approaches
3. develop and argue a position based on various legal disciplines
4. apply, at a basic level, quantitative and qualitative empirical research and analysis; methodologies, and interpret the outcomes
5. make a reasoned choice for a legal or social scientific approach, and reflect upon how the chosen approach will further the study of multilevel societal problems
6. conduct a small-scale supervised research project (formulate research questions, collect relevant quantitative and/or qualitative data, and apply legal or social scientific methods and techniques in a way appropriate to the context) and derive sound conclusions

C. Social and communication learning outcomes

The graduate is able to:

1. work in a focused and systematic way, both independently and as member of a team with diverse (national, cultural, disciplinary) backgrounds
2. clearly and convincingly present viewpoints and findings to different target groups, both verbally and in written form, in a scientifically substantiated manner

D. Study skills and professional orientation

The graduate is able to:

1. reflect on his or her own social responsibility within the local, national and international context in which the law functions
2. apply the necessary learning and study skills to reflect on his or her own learning process, and to continue further study with a higher degree of autonomy

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

BA1	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
	Theme 1: Security					
	Local theme: Defamation and Assault (6)	Global theme: Terrorism (6)	Philosophy of Law and Security (6)	Local theme: Amsterdam and the Platform Economy (6)	Global theme: Multinationals and The Platform Economy (6)	(BSA)
	Methodology and Empirical Research (6)	Criminology (6)		Statistics & SPSS (6)	Psychology (6)	
	Diversity (6)					
	BA2	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5
	Theme 3: Migration					
	Local theme: Global Migration Governance (6)	Global theme: Migration Law and The Nation State (6)	Negotiation, Mediation and Dispute Solution (6)	Global theme: Climate Change (6)	Local theme: (Un)sustainable Amsterdam (6)	Professional ethics (6)
	Qualitative Research Methods (6)	Sociology (6)		Evaluation Research (6)	Artificial Intelligence (6)	
	BA3	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5
MINOR (30)						
				Recap: Public Law (6)	Recap: Private Law (6)	Bachelor's thesis
				Recap: Criminal Law (6)	Bachelor's thesis (12)	

The colours relate to the four 'learning trajectories':

Blue: Law, legal sciences and related skills (light blue = local theme; dark blue = global theme)
Orange: Empirical research skills
Green: Social sciences
Yellow: General academic development

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Day 1: 7 February 2024

09.00	09.30	Arrival panel and welcome
09.30	10.00	Preliminary meeting panel (intern) & consultation hour
10.00	10.30	Conversation with faculty management
10.30	10.45	Break
10.45	11.15	Conversation with programme management B and M Rechtsgeleerdheid
11.15	11.45	Break
11.45	12.15	Conversation with students & alumni B Rechtsgeleerdheid
12.15	12.45	Conversation teaching staff B Rechtsgeleerdheid
12.45	13.45	Lunch
13.45	14.15	Conversation with students M Rechtsgeleerdheid
14.15	14.45	Conversation with alumni M Rechtsgeleerdheid
14.45	15.15	Conversation with teaching staff M Rechtsgeleerdheid
15.15	15.45	Break
15.45	16.45	Conversation with Exam Board
16.45	18.00	Composing preliminary findings B and M Rechtsgeleerdheid (panel intern); possibility for asking additional questions management B and M Rechtsgeleerdheid

Day 2: 8 February 2024

08.45	09.00	Arrival panel
09.00	09.30	Conversation with programme management B Law in Society and M LPIS
09.30	09.45	Break
09.45	10.15	Conversation with students & alumni B Law in Society
10.15	10.45	Conversation with teaching staff B Law in Society
10.45	11.15	Break
11.15	11.45	Conversation with students & alumni M LPIS
11.45	12.15	Conversation with teaching staff M LPIS
12.15	13.15	Lunch
13.15	14.45	Composing preliminary findings B Law in Society and M LPIS (panel intern)
14.45	15.15	Conversation with programme management B and M Notarieel Recht
15.15	15.45	Break
15.45	16.15	Conversation with students & alumni B and M Notarieel Recht
16.15	16.45	Conversation with teaching staff B and M Notarieel Recht
16.45	18.00	Composing preliminary findings B and M Notarieel Recht (panel intern); possibility for asking additional questions management B Law in Society, M LPIS, B and M Notarieel Recht

Day 3: 9 February 2024

08.45	09.00	Arrival panel
09.00	09.30	Conversation with programme management M Fiscaal Recht and M International Business Law
09.30	09.45	Break
09.45	10.15	Conversation with students & alumni M Fiscaal Recht
10.15	10.45	Conversation with teaching staff M Fiscaal Recht

10.45	11.15	Break
11.15	11.45	Conversation with students & alumni M International Business Law
11.45	12.15	Conversation with teaching staff M International Business Law
12.15	13.15	Lunch
13.15	14.30	Composing preliminary findings M Fiscaal Recht and M International Business Law (panel intern); possibility for asking additional questions management M Fiscaal Recht and M International Business Law
14.30	15.30	Final conversation programme management (all programmes)
15.30	16.00	Preparing feedback (panel intern)
16.00	16.30	Feedback

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the bachelor's programme Law in Society. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request.

The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- Previous NVAO report
- Self-evaluation report B Law in Society
- Regeling voor eindwerken Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid 2022
- Kader kwaliteitszorg RCH 2023
- Annual report Examencommissie Rechtsgeleerdheid 2022-2023
- Annual report Career Services Rechtsgeleerdheid 2022-2023
- Faculteitsreglement 2017
- Facultaire Nota Toetsbeleid 2022
- Domain-specific Framework of Reference WO Rechtsgeleerdheid 2015
- Convenant civiel effect 2016
- Law in ACTION: Onderwijsvisie Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid 2023
- Civiel effect in de VU-opleidingen 2023-2024 svz november 2023
- Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) B Law in Society 2023-2024
- Schematic overview curriculum B LIS 2023-2024
- Factsheet B LiS 2023
- Description of the themes in the programme
- Core Legal Elements
- Teachers and courses overview
- LiS English proficiency
- Mixed Classroom Inspiration Guide
- Assessment Plan LiS 2023
- Course Manual Thesis Law in Society 2022-2023