



**B Liberal Arts and Sciences
University College Groningen
University of Groningen**

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Project code P2310

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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

LAS UCG is an ambitious programme, aiming to educate creative and innovative thinkers who can view complex issues from multiple perspectives and can work on complex societal issues in interdisciplinary teams. The interdisciplinary project learning line and the well-guided option for a Free Major are clear strengths of the programme. The six roles and their associated learning outcomes that describe students' exit level are well-designed, and allow for student-directed flexibility as well as the above-average level of broadening and skills and attitudes required for a programme with the special feature of small scale and intensive education. The Programme Learning Outcomes match the Dublin descriptors for bachelor's programmes. As a suggestion for further continuous development, the panel encourages the programme to make more explicit its vision on interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary learning in the project learning line. In this process, the programme could use the new Advisory Board as a sounding board.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel studied the curriculum and found that it is well-structured. It includes a solid academic core with a substantial focus on research and methodology. Professional skills and attitudes are also adequately addressed, with a substantial focus on the roles of the academic integrator, collaborator and communicator. The interdisciplinary project learning line, the Free Major and the collaboration with Ca' Foscari are particularly strong aspects of UCG. They add onto the already very flexible and open model of the curriculum that allows for a student-led design of their programme in accordance with their personal interests. In combination with a strong guidance structure and clear Major prerequisites and entry requirements, students follow a coherent programme that aligns with the level of broadening set out in the ambitious intended learning outcomes. The panel noticed that the recent decision to remove specialization routes in the Major is still debated by stakeholders in the programme. The panel recommends the programme to develop with all those involved a common vision on the right balance between flexibility of the programme, student agency and guidance of students in their choices, also in the light of their options for further academic and/or professional careers.

The panel established that teaching methods are highly interactive and classrooms are small-scale, facilitating a rich exchange of experiences, ideas and knowledges. Students demonstrate a high level of participation, since they must attend class regularly to pass their courses. Success rates show that the programme is feasible and that the curriculum enables nominal study progress. The intake procedure is well-designed and geared toward selecting the most talented students for the programme. The procedure includes testing of English language skills as well as motivation for studying in a small-scale and intensive environment. The facilities of the programme are suitable for small scale teaching and the organization of social and content-related extracurriculars. In 2027, UCG plans to move to a new building on the healthy aging campus of the UG. This building is closer to UCG's student housing and will be fully wheelchair accessible. Students are well-supported in making course choices, and in exchange and internship planning as well as personal development. The guidance structure includes many elements such as mentoring for first year students, individual academic advisors, workshops, trainings, and events. The guidance team also supports students with functional impairments with requests to the Board of Examiners and finding specialized support from outside the faculty. Last but not least, both quantity and quality of the teaching staff are on a par with the challenging, small-scale and intensive education at UCG. Teaching staff have the right qualifications in research and teaching, are actively involved in the academic development and well-being of the students, are easy to access and passionate about their work.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel concludes that the programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place. UCG uses a variety of assessment types and actively safeguards the validity and reliability of assessment through a programme assessment matrix and peer review. Assessment workload has been improved for students as well as staff, and students have enough time to take repairs or resits. The programme is well-aware of the opportunities and risks of Artificial Intelligence and, in collaboration with the BoE, determines policy on it based on continuously evolving insights. The panel concludes that the BoE knows what it is doing and properly carries out its statutory tasks and responsibilities.

The thesis trajectory is clear and well-designed and the programme uses an appropriate thesis assessment form with a holistic feedback section, as was recommended by the 2018 panel. Students receive much feedback during the thesis process and rich oral feedback during the final assessment, but feedback and justification of the assessment should be better substantiated on the thesis assessment forms. The current administrative process does not sufficiently encourage this. Although the panel is convinced that the programme is well underway with improvements by switching to Brightspace, it recommends that the programme makes sure in the short term that all thesis supervisors and co-assessors properly comply with the thesis assessment procedure and provide sufficient written feedback and substantiation of their assessment on the thesis assessment form.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that students realize the ambitious intended learning outcomes of the programme, and achieve the high level and broadening required for programmes with small-scale and intensive education. The success rates of the programme are appropriate to a programme with the special feature 'Small scale and intensive education'. In the theses students demonstrate a high level of academic research skills. The internship testimonials and interdisciplinary project work demonstrate excellent communicative and collaborative skills and attitudes. Graduates are admitted to demanding postgraduate programmes and jobs. The panel recommends reconsidering and clarifying the (disciplinary) norms and demands concerning research methodology in the thesis.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts & Sciences

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

The panel assesses the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education of the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts & Sciences as follows:

Criterion A: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Criterion B: Curriculum – contents	meets the standard
Criterion C: Curriculum – learning environment	meets the standard
Criterion D: Intake	meets the standard
Criterion E: Staff	meets the standard
Criterion F: Facilities	meets the standard
Criterion G: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard

General conclusion

positive

Em. prof. dr. Ton van Haften
Panel chair

Adrienne Wieldraaijer-Huijzer MA
Panel secretary

Date: 27 January 2025

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 24 and 25 October 2024, the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University College Groningen was assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment Liberal Arts and Sciences. The assessment cluster consisted of 8 bachelor's programmes, offered by University College Twente (University of Twente), Leiden University College (Leiden University), Amsterdam University College (University of Amsterdam/Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), University College Roosevelt, University College Utrecht and the School of Liberal Arts (Utrecht University), Erasmus University College (Erasmus University Rotterdam), University College Groningen (University of Groningen), University College Maastricht, University College Venlo and the Maastricht Science Programme (Maastricht University) and University College Tilburg (Tilburg University). The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (valid from 1 April 2024). It also applied the Criteria Pertaining to the Distinctive Feature of Small-scale and Intensive Education (also published in the 2024 Uitvoeringsregels Accreditatiestelsel Hoger Onderwijs Nederland).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster Liberal Arts and Sciences. Fiona Schouten acted as coordinator and panel secretary. Peter Hildering, Irene Conradie, and Adrienne Wieldraaijer-Huijzer also acted as panel secretaries in the cluster assessment. They have all been certified and registered by the NVAO. Adrienne Wieldraaijer-Huijzer acted as panel secretary for the assessment of the programme of the University College Groningen.

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 5 April 2024, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chair on his role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The programme composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see appendix 3). The programme selected representative partners for the various interviews. It also determined that the development dialogue would be made part of the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programme provided the secretary with a list of graduates over the academic year 2023-2024. In consultation with the secretary, the panel chair selected 15 theses of the programme. They took the diversity of final grades, majors, double degree and examiners into account: 3 theses were selected from the Sciences major, 9 from Social Sciences (including 2 from the Social Sciences Double Degree collaboration), 1 from Humanities, and 2 from the free major. Prior to the site visit, the programme provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. It also provided the panel with a 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 report 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. Two persons requested a joint consultation session with the panel. 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

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings. This report is structured along the four NVAO standards, and integrates the seven criteria of the distinctive feature Small-Scale and Intensive Education in the discussion of the respective standards for the bachelor programme. The report was first submitted to the coordinator at Academion for peer assessment and then to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to University College Groningen 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 University College Groningen and the University of Groningen.

Panel

The following panel members were involved in the cluster assessment:

- Em. prof. dr. T. (Ton) van Haaften, professor emeritus at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics of Leiden University [panel chair];
- Em. prof. dr. L. (Laurent) Boetsch, professor emeritus in Romance Languages at Washington and Lee University in Virginia (United States) and founding executive co-director and president emeritus of the European Consortium of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS) [panel chair Leiden University];
- Dr. S. (Samuel) Abraham, rector/president of and associate professor in Political Science at the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (Slovakia);
- Prof. dr. M.K. (Marlies) Van Bael, professor in Chemistry at Hasselt University (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. S.B. (Stéphanie) Balme, director of the Center for International Studies (CERI) of the research university Sciences Po (France);
- Prof. dr. W.J.P. (Wim) Beenakker, professor in High Energy Physics at Radboud University;
- Prof. dr. H. (Helen) Brookman, professor of Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Education at King's College London (United Kingdom);
- Em. prof. dr. G. (Gerda) Croiset, professor emeritus in Education and Training in Health and Life Sciences at the University of Groningen;
- Dr. M.M.T.E. (Maud) Huynen, assistant professor at the Maastricht Sustainability Institute of Maastricht University;
- Dr. W.D.B.H.M. (Wim) Lambrechts, associate professor at the Faculty of Management of the Open University;
- Dr. B. (Bente) Nørgaard, associate professor at the Center for Problem-based Learning in Engineering Science and Sustainability of Aalborg University (Denmark);
- Em. prof. dr. J. (Janneke) Plantenga, professor emeritus in Economics of Public Welfare at Utrecht University;

- Dr. Ing. S. (Sabine) Sané, lecturer in Earth and Environmental Sciences at University College Freiburg (Germany);
- Prof. dr. J. (Jenny) Slatman, professor in Medical & Health Humanities at Tilburg University;
- Prof. mr. dr. H.S. (Sanne) Taekema, professor in Jurisprudence at the Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. dr. J. (Jolanda) Vanderwal-Taylor, professor in Dutch and German at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (United States);
- Prof. UAS. dr. J.I.A. (Irene) Visscher-Voerman, professor of applied sciences in Innovative and Effective Education at Saxion University of Applied Sciences;
- Prof. dr. H. (Henrik) von Wehrden, professor of Normativity of Methods at Leuphana University Lueneburg (Germany);
- N.B. (Nara) Coutinho, bachelor's student Liberal Arts and Sciences at University College Venlo (Maastricht University) [student member];
- M. (Milan) Gomes, bachelor's student Technology and Liberal Arts & Sciences at University College Twente (University of Twente) [student member];
- B.L. (Borbála Lucy) Karvalits, bachelor's student Liberal Arts and Sciences at Erasmus University College (Erasmus University Rotterdam) [student member];
- J.G. (Jamie) Wolvekamp, bachelor's student Liberal Arts and Sciences at University College Tilburg (Tilburg University) [student member].

The panel assessing the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences at University College Groningen consisted of the following members:

- Em. prof. dr. T. (Ton) van Haften, professor emeritus at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics of Leiden University [panel chair];
- Dr. S. (Samuel) Abraham, rector/president of and associate professor in Political Science at the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (Slovakia);
- Prof. dr. W.J.P. (Wim) Beenakker, professor in High Energy Physics at Radboud University;
- Prof. UAS. dr. J.I.A. (Irene) Visscher-Voerman, professor of applied sciences in Innovative and Effective Education at Saxion University of Applied Sciences;
- N.B. (Nara) Coutinho, bachelor's student Liberal Arts and Sciences at University College Venlo (Maastricht University) [student member].

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	University of Groningen
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive
Programme name:	Liberal Arts and Sciences
CROHO number:	50393
Level:	Bachelor
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	180 EC
Majors:	Humanities Sciences Social Sciences Free major

Special tracks

Double degree with Ca'Foscari University of
Venice

Location:

Groningen

Mode of study:

Fulltime

Language of instruction:

English

Submission date NVAO:

1 May 2025

Description of the assessment

Organisation

The Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) bachelor's programme in Groningen is offered by University College Groningen (UCG), which is one of eleven faculties of the University of Groningen (UG). Each year, approximately 150 students enrol. In addition to the regular programme, students majoring in social sciences can participate in a four-year double degree programme with Ca'Foscari University of Venice. This programme has a maximum of 5 placements for outgoing students and of 5 placements for incoming students. Educational activities of LAS take place at the UCG building on the Hoendiepskade 23/24. In addition, UCG has dedicated student residencies where all first year LAS students live. In 2027, UCG will move to a new building specifically designed for the needs of the LAS programme and in close proximity to the student housing.

Since the previous accreditation, UCG has changed and clarified its organizational structure. The changes were prompted by the school's desire to abandon the previous department structures within UCG, and to better support UCG's interdisciplinary vision and task allocation. In the current structure, the final responsibility for education lies with the Dean, who, together with the Managing Director and the Student Assessor, forms the Faculty Board. Responsibility for the programme content and education policy lies with the Academic Director of Education (ADE), who is supported by eight cluster coordinators as well as a coordinator for the double degree program. These coordinators (Academic Skills, Interdisciplinary Projects, Humanities, Politics and Law, Economics and International Business, Psychology, Health, Life and Neuroscience as well as Interdisciplinary AI, Double Degree) advise the ADE on the content, coherence and structure of parts of the curriculum. All lecturers within the programme are supervised by the Director of Academic Staff, who is responsible for HR related issues, career development, and task allocation. All non-academic staff is supervised by the Head of Support Staff. Together with the Faculty Board, the Academic Director of Education, the Director of Academic Staff and the Head of Support staff form the UCG Management Team who meet on a weekly basis to discuss the day to day business of the faculty.

The programme has its own Program Committee (PC). This PC and the Faculty Council actively review the content, quality and regulations of the programme. They have regular meetings with the ADE. The Board of Examiners (BoE) of the programme consists of three UCG members and two external members, and is supported by a formal secretary.

Recommendations previous assessment

The 2018 accreditation panel did not issue conditions. The general conclusion about the programme was positive. The previous accreditation panel gave recommendations for further development on Standard 2 and Standard 3. In Standard 2, the panel recommended prevention of overflows of communication to students, improvement of the onboarding procedure for new lecturers, and exploring possibilities to give teaching a higher priority in career development. UCG responded to the recommendations in Standard 2 by improving UCG's communication strategy to students and by implementing a new promotion policy for staff with an education and research track. Onboarding for lecturers has been improved through the implementation of introduction sessions for new staff, academic staff development meetings, and co-teaching. The programme is currently working on an onboarding protocol as well as a buddy system. In Standard 3, the 2018 panel recommended improving documentation of feedback on exams by lecturers, introducing a more formal structure for exam inspection, reconsidering the American grading system and including a holistic feedback section to the thesis assessment form. The 2024 panel established that UCG follows the university policy on inspection moment and that students are satisfied with this. The American

letter grading has been replaced by the standard Dutch 1-10 grading and a holistic feedback section has been added to the thesis assessment form.

The panel concludes that the recommendations by the 2018 panel have been taken up by the programme and have led to appropriate improvements. Adding written feedback on the thesis assessment forms remains a point of attention. For more information, see the chapter on Standard 3 in this report.

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

Profile and aims

The University of Groningen (UG) believes that the major scientific and societal challenges of our current society require the making and reinforcement of connections: across disciplines; between education, research and societal impact; within the academic community; and with the region, Europe, and the rest of the world. Therefore, the university actively stimulates learning and research in an interdisciplinary setting with partners to find sustainable, innovative solutions to the challenges that society faces.

The mission and approaches to learning of University College Groningen (UCG) are closely connected to the above-mentioned ambitions of the UG. Using an interdisciplinary, collaborative and guided approach to learning, UCG strives to deliver independent and innovative thinkers who are able to bridge academic disciplines and cultural differences to respond to the complex societal problems of the 21st century. The programme of UCG shares many characteristics with other Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) Programmes in the Netherlands. The curriculum provides for broad and deep learning, enhancement of knowledge and skills across disciplines, and self-directed learning. This is fostered by a residential, intensive and small-scale international learning environment, where the student and staff community are actively engaged in curricular and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the LAS programme at UCG has an interdisciplinary project learning line. This learning line prepares students to work in interdisciplinary and intercultural teams, to view complex issues from multiple perspectives and to share ideas and experiences with peers around the world. It also teaches students how to conduct independent research, develop innovative solutions for complex issues, and present findings to a broad audience.

The panel found that UCG's mission and profile are clear. The panel values the many opportunities given to students to shape their own programme, as is appropriate for a LAS-programme. Students can either follow one out of three Majors or opt for a Free Major. The panel has seen that all four options guarantee well-guided flexibility and a good balance between broad and deep learning, as well as the development of academic and professional skills and attitudes. The panel particularly appreciates the presence of a Free Major and flexibility in switching between majors, which – in line with the vision - explicitly caters a self-directed curriculum design beyond disciplines.

The panel studied the project learning line and discussed with the programme its vision on interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary learning. It concludes that the interdisciplinary learning line is an important asset to the programme with many interesting multi- or interdisciplinary projects (see Standard 2). The programme explained to the panel that in the beginning of their studies, students start with courses emphasizing that societal issues require multiple perspectives and exploring connections between these perspectives. From the second year onwards, the focus shifts towards application and integration of perspectives, knowledge and skills. The panel endorses this approach, although it could be made more explicit in the documentation. The panel learned that the programme plans to further develop its profile in the near future. The panel encourages this. To support the programme's own continuous development, the panel suggests that the programme further conceptualises and makes explicit its vision on interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary learning in relation to choices in the curriculum.

Programme learning outcomes

LAS UCG has defined six roles for graduates of the programme:

- Content Expert: graduates have broad multidisciplinary knowledge, specialized knowledge within a particular field and knowledge of complex problems.
- Researcher: graduates can use research methods and techniques to generate new knowledge.
- Innovator: graduates can learn in a self-directed manner and creatively apply their knowledge.
- Communicator: students can effectively communicate to a general as well as specialized audience through different media.
- Collaborator: students can work in culturally diverse and interdisciplinary teams.
- Academic integrator: students can combine knowledge and methods from multiple disciplines.

Each role includes a set of 4-6 programme learning outcomes (PLOs, see appendix 1) that have been coupled with the Dublin descriptors for bachelor's programmes, and that require the achievement of a high level of academic knowledge as well as the development of personal attitudes and skills.

The panel studied the intended learning outcomes of the programme. It found that they are well-connected to the profile and clearly described. They more than level up to the standards commonly accepted for a Liberal Arts and Sciences programme. Since the last accreditation round, the programme has made a distinction between the roles of Communicator and Collaborator and described them more clearly. The intended learning outcomes provide direction for an ambitious broad programme, with solid training in research methods, comprehensive skills training in communication and collaboration, and the discussion of societal issues from different perspectives.

The panel considers the programme's PLOs sufficiently in line with working field expectations, preparing students to work in interdisciplinary environments as creative problem solvers. The panel heard that the programme is planning to set up an Advisory Board with alumni and representatives from public and private organisations to enhance the connection of its profile and PLOs to relevant professional fields. The panel encourages the programme to do so.

Considerations

LAS UCG is an ambitious programme, aiming to educate creative and innovative thinkers who can view complex issues from multiple perspectives and can work on complex societal issues in interdisciplinary teams. The interdisciplinary project learning line and the well-guided option for a Free Major are clear strengths of the programme. The six roles and their associated learning outcomes that describe students' exit level are well-designed, and allow for student-directed flexibility as well as the above-average level of broadening and skills and attitudes required for a programme with the special feature of small scale and intensive education. The Programme Learning Outcomes match the Dublin descriptors for bachelor's programmes. As a suggestion for further continuous development, the panel encourages the programme to make more explicit its vision on interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary learning in the project learning line. In this process, the programme could use the new Advisory Board as a sounding board.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1 of the NVAO framework.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard A of the framework for the Distinctive Feature "Small-scale and Intensive Education".

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 content

The programme consists of 180 EC, and can be divided in three parts: the Academic Core (55 EC), the Major (95 EC) and the Minor (30 EC). See appendix 2 for an overview.

The Academic Core consists of courses that provide students with general academic skills and knowledge. On the basis of course materials and theses, the panel concludes that the curriculum has a substantial and solid focus on research and methodology, including statistics. The interdisciplinary project learning line is also part of the academic core. Students start with two foundational courses ‘Exploring Challenges in Modern Society’. Subsequently, students engage in three projects in years 1, 2 and 3. During the site visit, the panel was introduced to a number of projects and presented with project course materials. It found that the projects are interesting and relevant, covering a broad range of societal issues. Depending on the year in which they are given, the projects are sometimes more multidisciplinary and sometimes more interdisciplinary in nature. Projects that appeal to the panel include ‘Digital Democracy’ and ‘Arts in Health’. Some, but not all, projects involve external stakeholders or societal organizations (e.g. The Abled City).

In projects the programme addresses the PLO roles (see standard 1) alternately in an integrated and a more explicit manner, allowing students to develop content knowledge as well as collaborative and communication skills and attitudes. The programme is continuously looking for the right balance between implicit and explicit coaching on the collaborative skills. During the site visit, it arranged an in-depth development-oriented thematic session with the panel on this matter. The panel believes that the programme is already doing well, e.g. through reflection on personal backgrounds and the use of a special toolkit to coach the students during group work in the course ‘Exploring Challenges of Modern Society 2’. The panel encourages the programme to continue moving forward on the chosen path. A suggestion to make this aspect even stronger would be to use the learning goals as an explicit reference for the personal (continuous) reflections of the students, so that they can learn about their own development in relation to the (interdisciplinary) learning goals.

During the site visit, both students and staff members described the project learning line as enriching and a clear strength as well as an opportunity for further development of the programme. The panel fully agrees with this. In the upcoming years, the programme management intends to expand the projects and also the collaborations with external partners (e.g. other educational institutes and professional organisations). The panel encourages the programme to do this, and to align the further development of the interdisciplinary project learning line with the sharpening of the profile of the programme (see Standard 1).

The Major contains (at least) three dedicated research and methodology courses, elective courses and a thesis (10 EC for a regular thesis or 15 EC for an extended thesis). Students can choose to do a major in Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, but they can also opt for a Free Major if they want to combine courses from any discipline. The main focus in the majors lies on the fields Artificial Intelligence, Health-, Life- and Neuroscience (Science); Psychology, Economics, International Business, Politics and Law (Social Science) and Philosophy, Culture and Literature (Humanities). The panel established that UCG has 88 electives on offer in different years and majors, thus providing students with sufficient room to find a match

with their own interests. In addition, students can replace two courses in their Major with courses outside UCG for more in-depth knowledge. The panel noted that student enrolment in the Humanities Major is lower as compared to the Science and Social Sciences Majors. When asked, the programme confirmed this is indeed the case. At the same time, Humanities courses are very popular among students with a different Major. The panel suggests the programme to think about ways to make the Humanities Major more attractive to students. Broadening and deepening of knowledge and skills are also possible in the Minor. In the minor, students can follow courses inside as well as outside UCG, but they can also go on an exchange or do internship.

The programme concludes with a Bachelor Thesis of 10 EC or an Extended Bachelor Thesis of 15 EC. The thesis is done in the discipline of the Major (Humanities, Sciences, Social Sciences); students with a Free Major can choose to do their thesis in any discipline. The extended thesis requires a completed extended thesis form and individual approval by the respective cluster coordinators prior to the start of the thesis trajectory. The panel found that the thesis guidance and assessment trajectory is clear and well-designed. During the writing process, students get continuous formative feedback on their advancement, follow progress seminars with peer feedback in their Major and have the opportunity to attend thesis support groups for non-content related issues. In addition, 3-4 weeks before the final deadline, all students have a formal feedback moment to discuss the draft of the thesis.

Recently, the programme has made some changes. Up until 2023-2024, the UCG students did not only choose a Major, but also a specialization within the Major. These specializations have been removed for students starting in 2023-2024 and after, because they complicated the programme structure and pushed students to choose courses based on the requirements of the specializations rather than their academic interests. The panel explored how these changes work out in practice. To its satisfaction, it discovered that the removal of the specializations has not influenced the number of courses on offer. Students can still follow all the courses within the previous specializations – which are now named ‘fields of study’ – but these are not offered any more as fixed routes. This increases opportunities for students to create a pathway that suits their own academic interests. At the same time, the panel noticed that the removal of specializations is still debated. For example, some stakeholders have concerns about preparing students for a master's programme now that they are no longer steered by their specialization. In the view of the panel, the choice to remove the specializations on the one hand fits well with the emphasis on student agency in LAS programmes, but on the other hand it requires a good guidance structure for students when making choices, especially with regard to their options for their further academic and/or professional careers. Therefore, the panel recommends the programme to develop with all those involved a common vision on the right balance between flexibility of the programme, student agency and guidance of students in their choices, also in the light of their options for further academic and/or professional careers.

Ca' Foscari collaboration

Since 2019-2020, UCG students have the opportunity to enrol in a four-year collaboration (‘double degree’) with the University of Venice Ca' Foscari. The programme has a maximum of 5 placements for outgoing students and of 5 placements for incoming students. These are not always full. Students participating in this option choose a Social Science Major and focus their studies on the field of Philosophy, Politics and Economics. UCG students who participate in the collaboration follow the first two years of their bachelor curriculum in Groningen, and the last two years in Venice. UCG also welcomes incoming students from Ca' Foscari, who follow their first two years in Venice, and the last two years in Groningen. In the upcoming years, UCG intends to increase the number of students participating to fill all available placements.

The panel studied the curriculum and the organization of the Venice programme. It concludes that this is carefully designed, forming a good match with the UCG curriculum and constituting an enriching additional opportunity for students. The contract between UG and the University of Venice is clear on important aspects for collaboration and quality of education, including registration, admission, intake numbers, English language skills of students and staff (at least C1), the final project, the awarding of degrees and exams and academic regulations. It also contains a detailed overview of programme learning outcomes and the curriculum. Supervision of the thesis is done jointly by one assessor at Ca' Foscari and one assessor at UCG. The universities have installed a shared coordinating committee. At UCG, the double degree coordinator as well as the ADE are in regular contact with Ca' Foscari.

During the site visit, the panel discussed daily coordination and the organization of quality with management, staff members and students. It is pleased with the arrangements. According to the panel, now that the programme has been running for a couple of years with a relatively small group of students, it is time for the programme management to evaluate and fine-tune cooperation with Ca' Foscari. In addition, the panel finds that the programme still has untapped future opportunities to strengthen monitoring and collaboration with Ca' Foscari, e.g. with a lecturer exchange programme. It suggests further exploring such opportunities. This would also allow UCG to directly observe education at Ca' Foscari, and vice versa, and to identify possibilities for (further) alignment of educational approaches.

Curriculum learning environment and facilities

Education at UCG is grounded in the principle of experiential learning with an interdisciplinary approach. In practice, this means that during their programme students apply existing knowledge to real-world problems and seek new knowledge when and where they need it. To promote exchange of ideas and discussion, teaching methods are highly interactive and classrooms are small-scale, facilitating rich exchange of experiences, ideas and knowledges. The average student:staff ratio is 19.4 students per staff member. On average, students have a minimum of 4 contact hours per week for each course, thus a minimum, of 12 contact hours a week. At Ca' Foscari, students have access to a mix of larger and smaller classes. Students are also expected to demonstrate a high level of participation: they must attend class regularly to pass their courses. UCG requires a minimum of 80% attendance by students for all of its classes.

Along with interdisciplinarity comes strong encouragement of societal entrepreneurship and public engagement. This is realized through collaborations with societal partners in projects, internships and extracurriculars where students apply their newfound knowledge and skills directly for and in society. New possibilities for regional and (inter)national collaborations are actively explored and stimulated, and is an explicit part of the further development of the programme in the coming years. Students are also actively stimulated to do research with their teachers; the panel has seen various examples of academic articles co-authored by students and staff.

In line with the small scale and intensive nature of the programme, students are also actively encouraged to enrol in, and initiate, extra-curricular activities. UCG has provided the panel with an overview of all extra-curriculars in the last two academic years. These include social activities as well as activities that are closely connected to the curriculum or include external partners. Activities involve community events, civic engagement activities, academic lectures, undergraduate research opportunities as well as training in the fields of communication, cultural awareness and career development. Striking examples are the extra-curricular language courses, the first-year student mentor programme, the yearly Career Day, the Photography Club, the Lasagnas (Cooking Club), the Green Office, activities by student association CAERUS and the student-driven project Sexual Wellness Education Initiative (SWEI). Outgoing students at Ca' Foscari also have access to a large range of extracurricular activities, such as the Ca' Foscari Harvard Summer School

and model U.N. / E.U. events. The panel concludes that the programme has many extracurricular activities and positive ambitions to further extend these by offering extracurricular activities that are continuous throughout the semester. Students and staff together form a close-knit community, with shared responsibility for the organization of extracurricular activities. Student-driven activities and new initiatives are actively encouraged.

During a tour, the panel explored the facilities for small-scale and intensive education at UCG. It found that the building has appropriate facilities for curricular and extracurricular activities. Classrooms are suitable for small-scale teaching, and other facilities include a kitchen, a canteen, a student bar, outside seating areas and a basketball court, a wellness room (designed as part of a student project), a study area, a library, as well as a dedicated room for the student association Caerus. As a residential school, UCG also offers housing for all first-year students. Senior students are encouraged to find another place to live in Groningen, but are allowed to stay in the student housing if they want to. The current building of UCG is partly wheelchair accessible. The panel established that the programme is very involved in the topics of inclusivity and accessibility, also in its project education. In 2027, UCG plans to move to a new building on the healthy aging campus of the UG. This building is closer to UCG's student housing and will be fully wheelchair accessible.

Language of instruction

LAS UCG has an English name, is fully English-taught and has an international student body. UCG considers this to be essential to the quality of its programme, since it is its mission to prepare students to respond to complex societal and global problems and to take up careers in an international workplace. This requires students to develop cultural awareness, embrace multiple perspectives and to learn to work in intercultural teams. The panel supports the programme's choice for an English name and the use of English as language for communication and instruction. In the view of the panel, the use of English language is an inseparable part of the profile of the programme and a prerequisite for achieving its intended learning outcomes and ambitions. Sufficient attention is given to English-language proficiency of both staff and students. English language proficiency (C1) is an admission requirement for students and a hiring requirement for staff (near-native, C2) at UCG. At Ca' Foscari, both students and teaching staff are required to demonstrate at least C1 English language proficiency.

Intake and selection procedure

UCG offers a starting date in September and, as of 2026, also in February. Eligible students must have an equivalent to a Dutch VWO diploma with a grade point average of 6.5 or higher and C1 English language proficiency. UCG uses a holistic admission process to select the most suitable candidates. Applicants submit a motivational video in which they answer a series of questions, deliver proof of C1 English language proficiency and submit their CV. This information is used to evaluate academic achievements, motivation, personal experiences and English language proficiency. If there is a match, students will receive an offer from UCG which they can accept or decline. Once the 150 spots are filled, UCG will maintain a waiting list and distributes spots once they become available. Students who want to enrol in the 'double degree' programme apply for this during their first year at UCG or Ca' Foscari. Students are selected based on their grades and a motivation letter. At Ca' Foscari, students are also invited for an interview.

The panel studied the admission requirements. It found that they are appropriate and match with the ambitious intended learning outcomes of the programme. The admission process is well-designed and includes an adequate evaluation of academic and personal achievements. The panel appreciates that the selection procedure includes a motivation video where students need to reflect on a set of questions. This is an adequate way to test whether students really have sufficient English oral language skills and indeed have

the right motivation to study in a small-scale, intensive LAS-curriculum. During the site visit, students and alumni were positive about the application procedure.

Teaching staff

The programme is taught by 35 UCG lecturers (29 fte). UCG also hires associate staff from other faculties of the university (3 fte in 2023-2024) to broaden the academic expertise of the team. During the site visit, students indicated that they are very satisfied with their teachers. According to them, teachers are of high quality and approachable.

The 2018 panel recommended UCG to explore possibilities to give teaching a higher priority in career development of teachers. UCG responded to this by implementing a new promotion policy which allows academic staff to choose between an education and a research track. Currently, 18 UCG lecturers are in the teacher track and 17 in the research track (10 UD and 7 UHD). Regardless of the track they are in, all UCG lectures have at least 20% of their time reserved for research. The panel commends UCG for the career opportunities offered to teaching staff. It advises UCG to maintain the 20% research time for all staff members since the programme and the staff members benefit from this.

The panel found that UCG devotes much attention to the further development of the teaching team in education and research. 30 out of 35 UCG teachers hold the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ), 5 have recently started; 3 lecturers have a Senior Teaching Qualification (STQ) and 1 is currently involved in it. 31 lecturers hold a PhD, and 2 are in the process of obtaining one. Not only do teachers have the right teaching and research qualifications, but the panel also encountered a team that is truly keen on exploring and experimenting with teaching innovation. UCG lecturers are active contributors to the Teaching Academy of the University of Groningen and have been very successful in acquiring educational grants including multiple NRO projects (one Comenius Fellowship, one Comenius Senior Fellowships, a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and two further NRO projects), an Erasmus+ project of the EU, and five Virtual International Cooperation grants and two Scholarships of Teaching and Learning of the university. The panel applauds this and encourages UCG to keep looking for opportunities to strengthen research and teaching innovation.

Another recommendation of the 2018 panel was to improve the onboarding procedure for new lecturers. The panel established that UCG has taken several actions. The programme now organizes an introductory meeting for new staff with the director of academic staff and the head of support staff. Furthermore, UCG has improved documentation on policies, regulations and practices, and organizes weekly academic staff development meetings during a dedicated teaching free time slot. The panel learned that the programme is also working on an onboarding protocol as well as a buddy system where new staff is linked to experienced UCG staff members. The panel thinks it is a good idea to implement a buddy system. The panel also endorses ideas to facilitate more co-teaching -beyond co-designing- as a way for teaching staff to learn from and inspire each other.

In conclusion, the panel judges the quantity and quality of the teaching staff of UCG to be in line with the (high) ambitions of the programme and sufficient for the small-scale and intensive learning environment that UCG is aiming for. During the site visit, the panel learned that workload is an ongoing conversation, but that it is taken seriously by the programme management. UCG adequately addressed the recommendations of the previous visitation panel that concerned staff development and onboarding. The programme actively monitors and invests in the development of its academic staff, and stimulates career development in education as well as research-driven education.

Guidance, support and communication

The programme has a substantial guidance team of 4.3 fte to help students navigate the flexible, self-directed curriculum and to support them with personal development or personal circumstances. Each student is paired with an academic advisor for the duration of their studies, who provides personalized support and guidance through regular one-on-one meetings. In addition, extra attention is paid to guidance and community-building in the first year. During the first-year introduction weekend new students receive essential information while simultaneously meeting their guidance team and new peers. For international students, this is followed by a crash course in Dutch to help them integrate in the Netherlands. Furthermore, all first-year students are part of a six-month student-led mentor programme, organized and coordinated by the guidance team. Student-mentors follow mandatory training, and organize meetings with their mentor group every two weeks.

During the site visit, the panel further examined how the guidance of older students is organised. It determined that several activities are organized throughout the programme, such as practical workshops on effective studying, student well-being, time management, and reverse culture shock, on top of information sessions regarding Ca' Foscari, choosing courses, the Major and the Minor. Many of these events are organized by the guidance team, in close collaboration with students and academic staff members. During the site visit and in the student chapter, students were positive about the guidance they receive and the approachability of their mentor, academic advisor and lecturers. Students with functional impairments are encouraged to reach out to the guidance team prior to arriving at UCG. This team supports students with requests to the Board of Examiners and finding their way to UG facilities and support options. The panel concludes that guidance at UCG is student-centred, offering students individual guidance on academic matters and designing their study path, peer-to-peer guidance through the mentor programme and tailor-made guidance for personal circumstances or studying with a disability.

The 2018 panel recommended UCG to make sure that there is no overflow of communication to students. The 2024 panel examined whether and noticed that this has been improved. Students confirmed that academic communication at UCG is now streamlined through block e-mails, a biweekly Buzz newsletter and informational TV screens on campus that provide updates on events and vacancies. The study information section on Brightspace needs further clarification and more updated information. The programme recognizes this and efforts are being made to address this issue.

Feasibility and success rates

Between 2019 and 2022, the graduation rate in 3 years was 71%; and 88% in 4 years. The number of dropouts in the first year fluctuated around 10%. In 2021, the programme experienced a one-off peak in the dropout rate in the first year (19%). UCG believes this was caused by the COVID-pandemic that put pressure on the quality of small-scale and intensive programmes. The panel concludes that the programme success rates are on a par with those of other university colleges.

As for feasibility, the student chapter mentions that self-study preparations can be intensive in some courses and that there are differences in experienced workload between courses. The panel discussed this with students and staff members. It established that this is only a very recent signal that is taken seriously and might also have to do with differences in experienced workload between Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences because of different types of activities (e.g. many calculations, many papers, interdisciplinary work). Exploring the success rates of courses, the curriculum does not have many courses with high failure rates. Some delay can occur in the obligatory Research and Methodology courses because they build upon each other. To counteract this, some courses are offered twice a year. Students also indicated that they have enough time for repairs, resits, extra-curriculars, a side job as student assistant or the internship programme.

All things considered, the panel concludes that the programme is structured in such a way as to ensure nominal study progress, including the extra-curriculars. Signals of increased workload of students are taken seriously.

Considerations

The panel studied the curriculum and found that it is well-structured. It includes a solid academic core with a substantial focus on research and methodology. Professional skills and attitudes are also adequately addressed, with a substantial focus on the roles of the academic integrator, collaborator and communicator. The interdisciplinary project learning line, the Free Major and the collaboration with Ca' Foscari are particularly strong aspects of UCG. They add onto the already very flexible and open model of the curriculum that allows for a student-led design of their programme in accordance with their personal interests. In combination with a strong guidance structure and clear Major prerequisites and entry requirements, students follow a coherent programme that aligns with the level of broadening set out in the ambitious intended learning outcomes. The panel noticed that the recent decision to remove specialization routes in the Major is still debated by stakeholders in the programme. The panel recommends the programme to develop with all those involved a common vision on the right balance between flexibility of the programme, student agency and guidance of students in their choices, also in the light of their options for further academic and/or professional careers.

The panel established that teaching methods are highly interactive and classrooms are small-scale, facilitating a rich exchange of experiences, ideas and knowledges. Students demonstrate a high level of participation, since they must attend class regularly to pass their courses. Success rates show that the programme is feasible and that the curriculum enables nominal study progress. The intake procedure is well-designed and geared toward selecting the most talented students for the programme. The procedure includes testing of English language skills as well as motivation for studying in a small-scale and intensive environment. The facilities of the programme are suitable for small scale teaching and the organization of social and content-related extracurriculars. In 2027, UCG plans to move to a new building on the healthy aging campus of the UG. This building is closer to UCG's student housing and will be fully wheelchair accessible. Students are well-supported in making course choices, and in exchange and internship planning as well as personal development. The guidance structure includes many elements such as mentoring for first year students, individual academic advisors, workshops, trainings, and events. The guidance team also supports students with functional impairments with requests to the Board of Examiners and finding specialized support from outside the faculty. Last but not least, both quantity and quality of the teaching staff are on a par with the challenging, small-scale and intensive education at UCG. Teaching staff have the right qualifications in research and teaching, are actively involved in the academic development and well-being of the students, are easy to access and passionate about their work.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2 of the NVAO framework.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard B, C, D, E and F of the framework for the Distinctive Feature "Small-scale and Intensive Education".

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

System of assessment

The assessment system of the programme is outlined in the assessment programme and the assessment policy 2024-2025 of UCG. The panel established that UCG uses a variety of assessment types, including classical exams, essays, reflections, presentations, videos, podcasts and artworks. Validity, reliability and transparency of assessment are ensured through the use of a programme assessment matrix, and a UCG syllabus template. In addition, assessments and their relation to the PLOs are digitally accessible in Ocasys. The panel studied the assessment programme and a sample of assessments, and determined that the assessment system is balanced. In combination with the Major, course requirements and the guidance system, the system sufficiently allows for the attainment of the PLO roles. Transparency and reliability are further enhanced through the use of peer review of syllabi before the start of each course. All courses of the programme offer either a resit for the whole course or repair options tied to a specific assignment of a student. During the site visit, students confirmed that they have enough time to take resits.

To improve student and staff workload and well-being, UCG has recently decided to limit the number of summative assessments per course. Instead of three, each course must now have at least two summative assessments. Lecturers are advised not to exceed this number without good reason, and to rather supplement these assessments with formative evaluation moments. The panel agrees with this decision. During the site visit, it explored the effect of this decision on the workload of students and staff. It found that current signals show that the workload of students has improved. Due to the important role of interdisciplinary education at UCG, the assessment programme also involves a relatively large amount of group work. To its satisfaction, the panel established that group work may not contribute to the final course grade for more than 40%.

As in many academic programmes, management, lecturers and the Board of Examiners at UCG are concerned about the influence of AI on the validity of testing and fraud. In response to these developments, lecturers now make more use of assessment methods which are less vulnerable to the use of AI (e.g. class assignments and exams). Other solutions being applied are the integration of more interim assessment or feedback moments, or requesting that students write their essay in a lecture hall. The ultimate goal is to teach students how to use AI responsibly. The programme clarified AI policy to the students: students may use AI to correct spelling, grammar and vocabulary, but must indicate its use. Any other use of AI in assessments is considered as fraud. These guidelines have been drawn up in consultation with the BoE, which is in close contact on this topic with other BoEs of the UG. The panel concludes that the programme, like so many others in higher education, is searching for the right way to deal with AI and is actively learning to do so.

Assessment of the thesis

Upon submission of the final version, the Bachelor Thesis is checked for plagiarism and independently assessed and graded by the supervisor and a co-assessor. Supervisor and co-assessor then discuss their grades and determine whether they can agree on a final grade. The oral defence is only planned in case the grade for the written thesis is a passing grade. The final grade for the thesis is calculated with the passing grade of the oral defence. The panel concludes that the thesis assessment procedure is carefully designed. Several times a year the thesis process, including the grading, is discussed with all supervisors.

The thesis trajectory at Ca' Foscari follows the procedures established there. The panel agrees with the choice to have all double degree theses assessed by a UCG as well as a Ca' Foscari assessor. The thesis process in the double degree programme needs one small and relatively easy administrative corrective action. Currently, the assessment form by the Ca' Foscari assessor is not yet documented at UCG because this step was not integrated in the thesis assessment process of double degree students. The panel recommends that this step is included. During the site visit, the programme management confirmed that it will correct this irregularity in the short term.

The 2018 panel advised that UCG adds a short holistic feedback section to the thesis assessment form and insures these are used more consistently. The panel studied a sample of theses and found that the thesis assessment form is appropriate. A short holistic feedback section has indeed been added. However, the panel also found that the verbal feedback in the open comment boxes of the forms is in some cases very limited. As a result, it is not always clear how assessors arrive at their conclusion. Although the panel generally agrees with the given grades, the panel also wondered if the grading is clear to students and the BoE. During the site visit, the panel discussed this issue with assessors, alumni and the BoE. It found that students receive a lot of feedback during the thesis process and rich oral feedback during the final assessment. In other words, feedback is abundant and present but should be more extensively expressed in the assessment form, especially by the co-assessor who has not been in contact with the student during writing the thesis. The programme acknowledges that the written feedback on the assessment form still requires attention. The current administrative process does not sufficiently encourage this. The programme informed the panel that it is on top of this and is already planning changes in this process (by switching to Brightspace). Because of the importance of the transparency and justification of thesis assessment, the panel recommends that the programme makes sure in the short term that all thesis supervisors and co-assessors properly comply with the thesis assessment procedure and provide sufficient written feedback and substantiation of their assessment on the thesis assessment form.

Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners (BoE) of the programme consists of three internal members with positions at UCG and two external members with positions at other faculties/departments at UG. The three internal members represent the three different Majors in Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences. The BoE is supported by a formal secretary of 0.6 fte and receives regular updates on relevant issues through intervision meetings for UG Examination Boards. It is also in close contact with other UG BoEs on new developments such as Artificial Intelligence and has been actively involved in the planning of the 'double degree' programme in Ca' Foscari.

From the annual report of the BoE (2022-2023) and the conversation with representatives of the BoE, the panel concludes that UCG has a (pro)active and professional BoE that properly carries out its legal tasks and responsibilities. The BoE appoints examiners, awards degree certificates, and handles student requests and complaints. The BoE also evaluates six courses every six months to review the quality, validity and transparency of assessment; and performs checks on the assessment quality of the bachelor thesis on an annual basis. The checks of the assessment quality of the thesis include inspection of the thesis manual, examination of a representative sample of theses from the regular and extended track and benchmarking theses with the Board of Examiners of another Dutch University College. The outcomes of these checks are shared with the Faculty Board, ADE, and Programme Committee (PC) and are communicated in the annual report. In 2022-2023, the BoE recommended that there should be separate thesis assessment forms for the first and second assessor, and that the form needs to request information on the justification of the extended thesis. Based on the theses and assessment forms studied for the accreditation procedure, the panel concludes that this advice has been followed and that the evaluation loop is being completed. The annual

report of the BoE (2022-2023) also identified the need to improve communication, the provision of documentation for course evaluations, and cooperation with the ADE and Programme Committee. The panel discussed this issue during the site visit. All interview partners assured the panel that communication and collaboration has significantly improved.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place. UCG uses a variety of assessment types and actively safeguards the validity and reliability of assessment through a programme assessment matrix and peer review. Assessment workload has been improved for students as well as staff, and students have enough time to take repairs or resits. The programme is well-aware of the opportunities and risks of Artificial Intelligence and, in collaboration with the BoE, determines policy on it based on continuously evolving insights. The panel concludes that the BoE knows what it is doing and properly carries out its statutory tasks and responsibilities.

The thesis trajectory is clear and well-designed and the programme uses an appropriate thesis assessment form with a holistic feedback section, as was recommended by the 2018 panel. Students receive much feedback during the thesis process and rich oral feedback during the final assessment, but feedback and justification of the assessment should be better substantiated on the thesis assessment forms. The current administrative process does not sufficiently encourage this. Although the panel is convinced that the programme is well underway with improvements by switching to Brightspace, it recommends that the programme makes sure in the short term that all thesis supervisors and co-assessors properly comply with the thesis assessment procedure and provide sufficient written feedback and substantiation of their assessment on the thesis assessment form.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3 of the NVAO framework.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Quality of the theses

Prior to the assessment, the panel studied a sample of theses. The sample included two extended theses and two theses from the 'double degree' programme. The panel concludes that the theses address interesting and appropriate topics, with good use of multidisciplinary ingredients. The theses are well-structured and of high quality, with good and well-motivated methodology, and demonstrate excellent writing skills and good command of English language. This also applies for the extended theses and the theses from the double degree programme. The academic quality of graduates is also reflected in the many examples of student research that led to peer-reviewed articles and presentations at scientific conferences and renowned universities.

Although all theses were of high quality and in line with the above-average level of the programme, the panel did encounter variations in the amount of data collection, empirical research and creative/innovative components. In some cases, the chosen topics were in the eyes of the panel too empirical and thus a theoretical framework could not be substantiated. From the documentation and the conversations during the site visit, the panel concludes that the demands concerning research methodology in the thesis have not

been made concrete, which allows for discussion among the teaching team and variation in the application of methodologies. The panel therefore recommends reconsidering and clarifying the (disciplinary) norms and demands concerning research methodology in the thesis.

Performance of interns and graduates

In 2023, UCG participated in a national alumni survey of the University Colleges in the Netherlands. Results show that around 90% of UCG graduates pursue further education, 88% of which enrol in a master programme and 9% in a premaster programme. 63% of these students are admitted to a top 100 university. Based on this information, as well as discussions with alumni during the site visit, the panel concludes that graduates are admitted to demanding postgraduate programmes and, subsequently, jobs.

As part of their Minor, students can opt for an internship at a range of regional, national and global organizations and companies. In 2023, these included prominent organisations such as the Paris Court of Appeals, Philips, Unilever, UN Women Netherlands and the Embassy of Greece. In testimonials of internship organizations, students are praised by their external supervisors for their disciplinary knowledge, interdisciplinary skills, ability to collaborate and communicate, as well as for their critical thinking skills. These testimonials and the project work of students indicate that in year three of their studies, students are already well on their way in learning the necessary professional skills to strive in a postgraduate scenario. For success rates, see Standard 2. According to the panel, the success rates of the programme are on par with those of similar programmes with the feature of ‘Small scale and intensive education’.

Considerations

The panel concludes that students realize the ambitious intended learning outcomes of the programme, and achieve the high level and broadening required for programmes with small-scale and intensive education. The success rates of the programme are appropriate to a programme with the special feature ‘Small scale and intensive education’. In the theses students demonstrate a high level of academic research skills. The internship testimonials and interdisciplinary project work demonstrate excellent communicative and collaborative skills and attitudes. Graduates are admitted to demanding postgraduate programmes and jobs. The panel recommends reconsidering and clarifying the (disciplinary) norms and demands concerning research methodology in the thesis.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4 of the NVAO framework.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard G of the framework for the Distinctive Feature “Small-scale and Intensive Education”.

Recommendations

1. Develop with all those involved a common vision on the right balance between flexibility of the programme, student agency and guidance of students in their choices, also in the light of their options for further academic and/or professional careers.
2. For the double degree programme: make sure in the short term to document and make accessible the thesis assessment form by the assessor from Ca’ Foscari in UCG’s administrative systems.
3. Make sure in the short term that all thesis supervisors and co-assessors properly comply with the thesis assessment procedure and provide sufficient written feedback and substantiation of their assessment on the thesis assessment form.

4. Reconsider and clarify the (disciplinary) norms and demands concerning research methodology in the thesis.

Distinctive Feature Small-Scale Intensive Education

The bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences obtained the distinctive feature Small-Scale and Intensive Education in 2014. In 2018, the panel performing the practice-based assessment considered that further progress had been made, both in terms of the evaluation criteria and with regard to the points of attention raised by the initial review team. Another six years later, in 2024, the bachelor's programme and its distinctive feature are up for re-accreditation. The current assessment panel has looked at whether the programme still meets the conditions for granting the distinctive feature. In line with the NVAO Guidelines, the panel checked whether small-scale and intensive education has evolved into a quintessential feature of the bachelor programme. In the core part of this report, the panel has taken into account the criteria of the distinctive feature when assessing the quality of the bachelor's programme. In this section, the panel brings together its specific findings and considerations on these criteria and indicates whether an extension of the 'Small-scale and intensive education' distinctive feature is justified.

A. Intended learning outcomes

LAS UCG is an ambitious, open programme, aiming to educate creative and innovative thinkers who can view complex issues from multiple perspectives, and can work on complex societal issues in interdisciplinary teams. The interdisciplinary project learning line and the well-guided option for a Free Major are particularly strong aspects of UCG. The intended learning outcomes are well designed and ambitious. They allow for student-directed flexibility within an open curriculum, as well as the above-average level of broadening and skills and attitudes required for a programme with the special feature of small scale and intensive education. The six PLO's focus on academic knowledge and skills, as well as the development of personal attitudes and skills (e.g. collaboration and communication).

B. Curriculum: contents

The curriculum is well-aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the programme, their level and broadening. The panel values the multi-/interdisciplinary focus of the programme and the flexibility of the curriculum offering students many opportunities to follow their own interests, e.g. the Free Major, double degree programme, electives minor, and internships. Students have access to many extracurricular activities. These include social activities as well as activities that are closely connected to the curriculum, and also include external partners. Students and staff share responsibility for the organization of the extracurricular activities, while students are motivated to initiate new activities according to their interests.

C. Curriculum: learning environment

The teaching environment at UCG is inspired by the principle of experiential learning with an interdisciplinary approach. In the view of the panel, this approach is appropriate for the learning outcomes. To facilitate intensive and small-scale education and a high level of participation, teaching methods are highly interactive and class-sizes are small. The majority of teachers is involved in research and the programme actively encourages collaborative research with students and researchers on educational innovations. Students need participate actively to pass their courses and UCG requires a minimum of 80% attendance by students for all of its classes. The combination of curricular and extracurricular activities is feasible and successfully geared towards nominal study progress, as is demonstrated by the success rates.

D. Intake

The admission process is well-designed and includes an evaluation of academic and personal achievements, English language skills, as well as a motivation for small-scale and intensive education. The panel appreciates that the selection procedure includes a motivation video where students need to reflect on a set of questions. This is an adequate way to test whether students in practice really have sufficient English oral language skills and are motivated to study in a small-scale, intensive and residential environment with many extra-curriculars.

E. Staff

The teaching staff is well-qualified in terms of academic background, teaching qualifications and English language skills. The programme actively monitors that teachers hold the required qualifications and gives high priority to their professionalisation and career development, both in teaching and research. Students receive individual and personalised counselling from an academic advisor and an extensive guidance team. Staff and students make up a close learning community and staff is closely involved with the students. The core teaching staff team has a sufficient size to ensure small-scale and intensive education.

F. Facilities

The panel found that the programme has its own infrastructure and facilities which is suitable for small-scale and intensive education. This infrastructure includes a dedicated building for small-scale academic and educational activities of UCG, and residential facilities for first year students of the programme. UCG actively evaluates and monitors suitability of its own academic and residential facilities for small-scale and intensive curricular and extracurricular activities. In 2027, UCG will move to a new building, which is specifically designed for the needs of the LAS-programme, in close proximity to the student housing and wheelchair accessible.

G. Achieved learning outcomes

The quality of the theses is very good and in line with the intended learning outcomes. In the view of the panel, they display the above-average level and broadening as set out in the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The panel especially appreciates the high level of academic and communication skills demonstrated in them. The success rates of the programme are appropriate to a programme with the special feature 'Small scale and intensive education' and on par with those of similar programmes with this feature. Third year internship students are praised by their external supervisors for their disciplinary knowledge, interdisciplinary skills, ability to collaborate and communicate, as well as for their critical thinking skills. Graduates continue their studies in relevant prestigious master's programmes at top 100 universities.

General conclusion NVAO Framework

The panel has established that the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences meets all four NVAO standards under consideration: intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, assessment, and achieved learning outcomes.

As a result, the panel's overall assessment of the quality of the bachelor programme Liberal Arts and Sciences is positive.

General conclusion Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education

The panel has established that the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences meets all seven criteria of the distinctive feature Small-Scale and Intensive Education: intended learning outcomes, programme content, learning environment, intake, staff, material facilities, and achieved learning outcomes. It considers that small-scale and intensive education has become an integral part of the bachelor programme.

As a result, the panel's overall assessment of the distinctive feature Small-Scale and Intensive Education in the bachelor programme Liberal Arts and Sciences is positive.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

A graduate...

Role	Program Learning Outcome
1. ... is competent and confident in the role as a Content Expert .	1.1 - ... has a broad understanding of fundamental paradigms, concepts and models in more than one discipline 1.2 - ... has in- depth understanding of paradigms, concepts and models in at least one of the Majors 1.3- ... has a broad understanding of the contribution of arts to the Sciences 1.4 - ... is able to understand the origin and context of complex real-world situations 1.5 - ... is able to apply an interdisciplinary academic approach using these paradigms, concepts and models to solving complex real-world problems
2. ... is competent and confident in the role as a Researcher .	2.1 - ... has broad understanding of academic research design 2.2 - ... has a more in-depth understanding of the research methods and techniques used in at least one of the Majors. 2.3 - ... is able to select and apply the most appropriate methods and techniques in their research. 2.4 - ... is able to critically evaluate scientific knowledge and limitations of fundamental theories and research methods within the chosen Major 2.5- ... has a broad understanding of artistic approaches in searching for creative and innovative solutions to complex societal problems. 2.6- ... understands the complexities of integrating scientific and artistic approaches.
3. ... is competent and confident in the role as an Innovator .	3.1 - ... is able to apply existing knowledge with imagination and creativity 3.2- ... has acquired the foundations and skills for lifelong learning 3.3 - ... reflects on personal performance (strengths and weaknesses) 3.4- ... demonstrates ability to design their own learning path and learn in an active, deep and self-directed manner

Role	Program Learning Outcome
4. ... is competent and confident in the role as a Communicator .	4.1 - ... is an effective communicator in different media
	4.2 - ... is able to translate abstract concepts into meaningful and clear language
	4.3 - ... is able to report and discuss research outcomes with both a specialised and non-specialised audience
	4.4 - ... is able to communicate processes, conclusions and recommendations of a project in a compelling way
5. ... is competent and confident in the role as a Collaborator .	5.1 - ... effectively collaborates with peers, teaching staff and experts.
	5.2 - ... knows the value of and is able to participate in interdisciplinary teams
	5.3 - ... is aware of different collaboration and leadership styles and is able to adapt as needed
	5.4 - ... understands the need for and encourages diversity
6. ... is competent and confident in the role as an Academic Integrator .	6.1 - ... is able to apply knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.
	6.2 - ... is able to integrate different disciplinary perspectives and knowledge
	6.3 - ... understands that complex situations cannot be addressed by a single discipline
	6.4 - ... formulates which information is needed and effectively uses this information to make thoroughly weighted decisions, particularly in light of ethical, legal and social implications

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

Structure of the Degree Programme				
YEAR 1 (60 ECTS)	Academic Core (35 ECTS)	UCG1RM01 <i>Academic Skills</i>	5 ECTS	
		UCG1AC02 <i>Introduction to Academic Research</i>	5 ECTS	
		UCG1AC03 <i>Exploring Challenges of Modern Society 1</i>	5 ECTS	
		UCG1AC04 <i>Exploring Challenges of Modern Society 2</i>	5 ECTS	
		Two LAS core electives	10 ECTS	
	UCG1AC01 <i>Project Year 1</i>	5 ECTS		
	Major (25 ECTS)	One Research & Methodology elective course		5 ECTS
Four level 100 or Research & Methodology elective courses		20 ECTS		
Students wishing to follow a Major in Humanities, Social Sciences or Sciences need to choose at least 3 courses within that discipline. Students wishing to follow a Free Major can choose courses within any discipline.				
YEAR 2 (60 EC)	Academic Core (15 ECTS)	UCG2AC01 <i>Project Year 2</i>	10 ECTS	
		UCG2AC02 <i>Philosophy of Science</i>	5 ECTS	
	Major (45 ECTS)	Two Research & Methodology elective courses		10 ECTS
		One level 100, 200 or 300 course AND		35 ECTS
Six level 200 or 300 or Research & Methodology elective courses.				
Students wishing to follow a Major in Humanities, Social Sciences or Sciences need to choose at least 5 courses within that discipline. Students wishing to follow a Free Major can choose courses within any discipline.				
YEAR 3 (60 EC)	Minor (30 EC)	University minor or personal minor.	30 ECTS	
		Personal minors can include courses of every discipline and can include a 15 ECTS internship and R&M elective courses. Personal minors need prior approval by the Board of Examiners.		
	Major (25 ECTS)	Three 300 level electives courses and a 10 ECTS Bachelor thesis.		25 ECTS
		OR		
		Two 300 level electives courses and a 15 ECTS Bachelor thesis.		
Students wishing to follow a Major in Humanities, Social Sciences or Sciences need to choose these courses and write their thesis within that discipline. Students wishing to follow a Free Major can choose courses and write their thesis within any discipline.				
	Academic Core (5 ECTS)	UCG3AC01 <i>Project Year 3</i>	5 ECTS	

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Day 1

Date	time	session/	Participants
October 23 (Wednesday)			
	15:00-23:00	Check-in Hotel Halbert	panel only
	18:00	Dinner at restaurant Naud	panel only

Day 2

Date	time	session/	Role	Major
October 24 (Thursday)				
	9:30-9:45	Welcome panel	Dean Academic Director of Education	
	9:45-10:30	Panel preparation		
	10:30-11:15	Interview program management	Dean Academic Director of Education Director of Academic Staff Managing Director Academic Advisor	
	11:15- 11:30	Internal panel session		
	11:30-12:15	Interview students and alumni	Student Assessor Faculty Board Member Faculty Council Student Mentor Former Student Assessor Faculty Board Vice Chair Programme Committee Chair Study Association Caerus Alumnus	Humanities Science Social Science Free Major Free Major Science Science

Alumnus, Double Degree Program Social Science

12:15-13:00 Lunch and internal panel session

13:00-13:45 Interview teaching staff
 Chair Faculty Council Social Science
 Chair Programme Committee Social Science
 Cluster Coordinator Humanities
 Humanities Science
 Lecturer Social Science
 Lecturer Social Science
 Lecturer Science
 Lecturer Social Science

13:45-14:00 Internal panel session

14:00-14:45 Interview Board of Examiners
 Chair Board of Examiners Humanities
 Member Board of Examiners Science
 Member Board of Examiners as of September 1, 2024 Social Science

14:45-15:00 Internal panel session

15:00-17:00 Tour of the facilities and showcasing

18:00 Dinner/meeting at the hotel Halbert, 3 course dinner in separate room "De Bibliotheek"

Date	time	session/	Role
October 25 (Friday)			

9:00-9:30 Panel preparation

9:30-10:30 Thematic session: Group work; teaching and assessment
 Course Coordinator Project Year 1 and Year 3
 Cluster Coordinator Projects
 Visiting Scholar
 Academic Director of Education
 Project Supervisor

10:30-11:15 Internal panel session

**11:15-12:00 Concluding session
program management** Dean

Academic Director of Education
Director of Academic Staff
Managing Director
Academic Advisor

Student Assessor Faculty Board

12:00-13:00 Concluding internal panel session and lunch

13:00-13:45 Development dialogue Dean

Academic Director of Education
Director of Academic Staff
Managing Director
Academic Advisor

Student Assessor Faculty Board

13:45-14:15 Oral Feedback Panel

14:15 Informal drinks

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request.

The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- UCG Self-evaluation report 2024
- Strategic Plan UCG 2021-2026
- Teaching and Examination Regulations 2024-2025
- UCG Assessment Programme 2024-2025
- Contract Double Degree Ca' Foscari
- Domain Specific Reference Framework
- UCG Course Syllabus Template 2024-2025
- UCG Assessment Policy 2024-2025
- Thesis assessment protocol
- Thesis assessment form
- Education Monitor 2023-2024 UCG
- Appendix to Education Monitor
- Overview of extracurricular activities 2023-2024 and 2022-2023
- Annual Report of the UCG Board of Examiners 2022-2023
- Annual Report of the UCG Programme Committee 2023-2024
- Teaching staff UCG 2023-2024
- Overview Committees, Boards and other positions within UCG 2024-2025
- UG Online Course Catalogue Ocasys
- Sample courses, including tests, grading models and repair information