

Report on the Master in
International Relations and Diplomacy

MIRD

Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs

Site visit: 4-7 March 2024

Date final report: 22 September 2024

Content

1. Summary	4
2. Introduction	6
2.1. Assessment framework	6
2.2. Panel	6
2.3. Approach	6
2.4. Working Method	6
3. Characteristics of the programme	8
3.1. Administrative data	8
3.2. Organisation	8
3.3. Recommendations previous assessment	8
4. Strong points	9
5. Recommendations.....	10
6. Assessment	11
Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	12
Findings and considerations.....	12
Conclusion	13
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	14
Findings and considerations.....	14
Conclusion	18
Standard 3: Student assessment.....	19
Findings and considerations.....	19
Conclusion	20
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes.....	21
Findings and considerations.....	21
Conclusion	22
7. Appendices.....	23
Appendix 1: Intended Learning Outcomes	24
Appendix 2: Schematic overview of the curriculum	25
Appendix 3: Documents studied	26
Appendix 4: Site visit schedule	27

1. Summary

The Master of International Relations and Diplomacy (MIRD) is a two year, advanced master programme of 120 EC that prepares students to work in the fields of international relations, conflict resolution and diplomacy. The panel was impressed with this unique programme and the way potential challenges are dealt with.

The two year programme provides a lot of time to train the students. This time is excellently spent combining profound academic knowledge, broad coverage of methodology and research skills, and content with insight into practice (policy and internship). During the site visit, the panel met with happy, motivated students and alumni that follow(ed) a programme with a clear purpose and setup. The panel is positive about all aspects it had to assess. The main point of attention is that the programme could – and on occasion should – be more proactive, for example, how to deal with AI in essays.

The main challenge MIRD faces, is future proofing the programme for further (potential) growth. Although it is not the ambition to continue growing, it might happen. In that case, the panel feels that MIRD requires formal structures and approaches to continue providing the current high quality teaching.

Standard 1

The MIRD programme aims to equip students with knowledge, understanding, and skills in international relations, focusing on international organization, conflict resolution, and diplomacy. It emphasizes bridging theoretical foundations with practical applications, supported by a partnership with the Clingendael Institute, which enhances both academic and practical relevance. The programme prepares students for careers in various international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as roles in public administration, think tanks, research institutions, and international interest associations. The panel acknowledges that the programme's aims are relevant and aligned with the needs of the professional field, appreciating the practical experiences offered through collaborations.

The programme's intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are comprehensive, aligning with the internationally recognized Dublin descriptors and ensure students gain specialized knowledge in international relations and diplomacy, along with research skills and methodologies to design and execute research strategies effectively. The advanced nature of the MIRD programme is highlighted by its rigorous coursework, higher level of research, and the inclusion of a mandatory internship. The panel recommends defining and consistently communicating what constitutes 'Advanced Studies' to manage expectations and strengthen the programme's label.

Overall, the panel concludes that MIRD meets the standard, aligning with labour market needs and academic requirements, thus equipping graduates for successful careers in both professional and academic settings.

Standard 2

MIRD attracts talented international students through a rigorous selection process. The programme's international classroom comprises students from diverse backgrounds, enhancing cross-national learning. Teaching in English aligns with the global nature of international relations and diplomacy, preparing students for professional life. The curriculum begins with foundational courses in research and methodology, followed by in-depth studies on diplomacy, negotiations, and political economy. The programme includes a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods and a structured thesis path that culminates in an advanced-level master's thesis.

The curriculum is designed to accommodate the varied academic backgrounds of students, with foundational courses in the first year and more specialized topics in the second. MIRD integrates rigorous academic training with practical experiences, such as a mandatory three-month internship, which allows students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. The collaboration with the Clingendael Institute further strengthens

the connection between academic studies and professional practice.

MIRD's growth over the past five years has led to increased elective options and expanded academic staff, though it presents challenges such as maintaining the interactive nature of seminars and managing the high workload for students. The programme emphasizes student support, with dedicated staff and a student-centred approach fostering community building. The diverse and well-qualified teaching team enhances the quality of education, with guest lecturers providing valuable insights. The structured and dynamic curriculum ensures students are well-prepared for careers in international relations and diplomacy, although further growth requires proactive strategies to sustain high-quality teaching and personalized learning experiences.

Standard 3

MIRD employs a comprehensive and structured assessment system. Assessments are varied, encompassing written assignments, presentations, and research projects, with a focus on advanced engagement with literature. Student feedback indicates that while the programme is rigorous and writing-intensive, it effectively fosters deep engagement with the material. The panel commends the programme's innovative assessment methods, such as team-based writing projects, which prepare students for collaborative work environments post-graduation.

The thesis assessment process involves independent reviews by the thesis supervisor and a second reviewer. The Board of Examiners is proactive in

maintaining assessment quality, handling cases of potential fraud, and ensuring consistency in grading. The panel recommends that MIRD address the challenge of maintaining personalized feedback amidst growing student numbers and adopt a more proactive approach to managing AI's role in assessments.

Standard 4

The panel reviewed a selection of fifteen theses, which demonstrated a high level of understanding in research design, essay writing, and overall research quality. The theses were well-structured, connecting research questions to theoretical frameworks and incorporating valuable surveys and experiments. High-graded theses were particularly exceptional, reflecting the programme's rigorous standards. The panel praised the detailed feedback from examiners, consistency in assessments, and the early allocation of well-suited supervisors, all contributing to the high quality of the theses.

MIRD graduates excel in the professional field, securing competitive positions in international relations, diplomacy, and academia. The programme bridges academia and practical diplomacy through Clingendael's involvement and prepares students for the job market. Alumni maintain strong connections through events and online platforms, fostering a close-knit community. However, non-European students face challenges in finding jobs in Europe, prompting the panel to suggest more guidance for this group. Overall, the programme effectively demonstrates its intended learning outcomes through rigorous thesis processes and successful graduate employment.

Standard	Judgement
1. Intended learning outcomes	Meets the standard
2. Teaching-learning environment	Meets the standard
3. Student assessment	Meets the standard
4. Achieved learning outcomes	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive

2. Introduction

2.1. Assessment framework

This advisory report contains findings, considerations and judgements about the Master in International Relations and Diplomacy (MIRD) of the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs of Leiden University. The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) bases its accreditation decision on this report.

The MIRD programme is part of a cluster of ten advanced master's programmes at Leiden University that are assessed as a cluster by one panel. Nine programmes are offered by Faculty of Law (Leiden Law School) and one by the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs (FGGA).

2.2. Panel

The panel that performed the assessment of the master's programme in MIRD consists of independent experts, including one student member. The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 20 October 2023:

- Prof. Ramses Wessel (chair), Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Groningen, professor and Head of the Programme European and Economic Law;
- Prof. Erik Franckx, Professor, former Director of the department/section on International and European Law, Faculty of Law and Criminology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium;
- Prof. Anna Konert, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Administration, Lazarski University in Warsaw, Poland;
- Dr. Stefan Lorenzmeier, Academic staff member in charge of the International Relations of the University of Augsburg's Faculty of Law, Germany;
- Prof. Kirsten Sandberg, Professor of Law, Department of Public and International Law, University of Oslo, Norway;
- Prof. Thomas Krebs, Associate professor in Commercial Law, University of Oxford, UK;
- Dr. Adam Chalmers, Senior Lecturer of European Union Politics, Politics and International Relations, University of Edinburgh, UK

- Prof. Burkhard Schafer, Professor for Computational Legal Theory, University of Edinburgh, UK;
- Ms. Liv Bennink LL.B (student member), Master student in Law, Utrecht University.

The panel was supported by drs. Linda te Marvelde and dr. Meg van Bogaert, who acted as independent secretaries.

2.3. Approach

The university, programmes, panel and secretaries agreed on a 'development-oriented' approach to the assessment. This makes use of the opportunity offered by the assessment framework to place less emphasis on accountability and more on improvement and development. This methodology is based on trust and responds to the autonomy and ownership of the study programme as emphasised in the framework. Transparency, openness, and co-creation are key in this approach. Characteristic of the development-oriented approach is that the panel makes a preliminary statement about the generic quality of the programme on the basis of existing documentation. The subsequent site visit is – in part – dedicated to discussing the programme's own themes that are of importance to its development. This step-by-step approach aims to reduce the pressure traditionally placed on site visits. The programme knows in advance where it stands and thus experiences the opportunity to openly submit development themes to the panel. This promotes an equal dialogue between peers.

2.4. Working Method

Approximately ten weeks before the site visit (20 December 2023), the panel received the documentation, including a self-assessment report and a selection of fifteen recent master's theses including their evaluation forms (see appendix 3). These documents formed the basis for the assessment of the generic quality achieved. The panel studied the documents and organised an online panel meeting two weeks prior to the site visit (23 February 2024). In this meeting, the panel discussed its initial findings and provisional

conclusions regarding the quality achieved on the four standards of the assessment framework. Part of the meeting was a (online) consultation opportunity for students and lecturers who wanted to engage in conversation with the panel. No one took advantage of the opportunity to speak with the panel about the MIRD programme

On 26 February 2024, (representatives of) the panel had an initial online meeting with the Faculty Boards of Leiden Law School and FGGA to discuss some of the panel's initial impressions and questions.

The site visit took place on 4-7 March 2024 in Leiden (see appendix 4). During the site visit, the panel spoke with delegations of students and teaching staff, examinations board, alumni, professional field and the management team of the programme. Part of the site visit was dedicated to development themes that the programmes themselves identified.

These discussions also provided the panel with the opportunity to raise (remaining) questions regarding

the generic quality of the programme with those involved. At the end of the visit, the panel drew up findings and recommendations. The panel's chair presented these orally to stakeholders of the programme.

After the visit, the secretaries drew up the advisory reports of all ten programme under review. The report presented here contains the assessment of the programme's generic quality on the four standards of the framework. After processing the panel's feedback, the secretary sent this advisory report to the programme for the purpose of fact-checking the text. The secretary has corrected factual inaccuracies identified by the programme in the final version. The executive board of Leiden University received the final report on 26 September 2024.

Due to overlap in programme structure and support in this cluster, some repetition in the assessment reports is inevitable. These overlapping parts have a different colour (blue) from the programme-specific parts.

3. Characteristics of the programme

3.1. Administrative data

Programme name:	Master in International Relations and Diplomacy
CROHO:	75022
Level and orientation:	Academic Master's programme ('post-initial' master)
Degree	MSc
Credits:	120
Specialisations or tracks	N/A
Location:	The Hague
Mode of study	Full time
Language of instruction	English

3.2. Organisation

The Master in International Relations and Diplomacy (MIRD) is a post-initial master's programme that is offered by the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs (FGGA) in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael. MIRD is embedded in the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) and collaborates with the Institute of Political Science at Leiden University. In September 2022, 68 students enrolled in the first year of MIRD, while 63 students started in the second year.

The Academic Board of each Master Advanced Studies programme consists of a Programme Director, an Academic coordinator and a Programme coordinator. This Board is responsible for the day-to-day running of the programme, the development of the programme, for student mentoring and advice and for the assessment of academic work.

The MIRD programme has an Educational Committee (in Dutch: opleidingscommissie) in which lecturers and students are represented.

Leiden University is a public organisation, funded by the Dutch government. However, the Advanced Studies LLM programmes are non-funded. This means that no government funding is received and therefore the tuition fees cover the full programmes costs.

3.3. Recommendations previous assessment

In the 2018 reaccreditation report no specific recommendations were given to the MIRD programme. Based on the feedback by the panel in the previous report, several suggestions were taken up as implicit recommendations. Throughout the standards, these suggestions are taken into consideration by the present panel.

4. Strong points

The panel identified numerous strengths with the key strengths listed below.

1. The MIRD programme, its lecturing staff and students made an overall outstanding impression. MIRD has an attractive curriculum, adaptability and highly satisfied students who are well prepared for their future careers.
2. The programme combines a rigorous academic approach (e.g., research methodology) with practice (Diplomacy and connection to Clingendael). The internship is considered a fundamental aspect of MIRD and its connection to the professional field.
3. There is a clear process of thesis assessment, including an independent assessment of the second reviewer. The theses are overall of high quality.
4. MIRD has a strong alumni network that is used to support students. Students, alumni and lecturers form a close-knit community.

5. Recommendations

The panel makes several recommendations to aid with the further development of the programme. These do not detract from the positive assessment of the generic quality of the programme.

1. A general recommendation for all Advanced programmes is to formulate a clear definition of what the 'advanced' label entails. It is recommended to adopt such a shared definition across all programmes, to ensure consistent messaging towards all stakeholders, and to be able to manage the expectations of prospective students accordingly.
2. MIRD is recommended to more proactively deal with the (potential) challenges it perceives. For example, the impact of continued student growth or dealing with issues like AI and ChatGPT.
3. Despite a lot of guidance and support, it is difficult and stressful for students to find an internship. There are alternatives available, but they appear to have an academic focus rather than a professional one. The panel recommends implementing an alternative that has the same learning objectives as the internship itself.
4. MIRD is a very intensive programme, with an experienced uneven distribution of study load throughout the year. Although students do not find the intensity of the programme problematic, peak load should be avoided.
5. Although the theses are assessed independently by two examiners, of which one is a supervisor, this is not clear from the documentation. The panel recommends to clearly describe the process in the procedures.

6. Assessment

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 and considerations

Ambition of the programme

The Master of International Relations and Diplomacy (MIRD) aims to impart student knowledge, understanding and skills in the field of international relations, including international organisation, conflict resolution and diplomacy.

MIRD aspires to bridge the practice of international relations and diplomacy with having a high academic standard, by offering an alteration of research, theory and practice. MIRD-students need to be aware of the theoretical foundations of international relations and related fields, have knowledge of the theory and practice of international organizations and know about key historical developments in international relations, international organization and diplomacy. In addition, students need to be able to use other approaches and disciplines in the analysis of crucial current or past developments in international relations.

According to the panel, the collaboration with the Clingendael Institute enhances the programme's academic standard and practical relevance, making it a compelling choice for aspiring professionals and scholars in the field. From both the student chapter and the session with students, it is clear that they particularly value the collaboration with Clingendael. It offers them a unique opportunity to combine the academic knowledge and skills with the knowledge of the Clingendael network and related practical experiences and insights.

The panel is of the opinion that the aims of MIRD are relevant and meet the needs of the relevant (international) diplomatic organisations as well as academic developments and trends. MIRD prepares students for careers in international governmental

and non-governmental organisations, international diplomacy, public administration, think tanks and research institutions and international interest associations.

Intended learning outcomes

The aims and ambitions are translated into ten Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), comprising of five main intellectual learning objectives and five skills qualifications (see Appendix 1). These ILOs are detailed and related to the internationally recognised Dublin descriptors at master's level, for example by deepened and specialised knowledge in the specific field of international relations and diplomacy.

In terms of research skills and methodology, MIRD students obtain the capacity to apply respective knowledge, to formulate important research questions and to design and execute appropriate research strategies – based on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies – in order to answer these questions. Students in the MIRD programme also learn explicitly how to test theoretical propositions based on empirical evidence. The academic knowledge and skills obtained in the MIRD programme, including the capacity to apply adequate political science research methods and tools, and the ability to present academic results, also prepare students for continued academic education or research in the framework of advanced professional settings.

According to the panel, MIRD is aligned with the master's level, as evidenced by its rigorous ILOs that have been formulated according to the internationally recognised Dublin Descriptors. This ensures a deep and critical engagement with international relations and diplomacy, balancing theoretical knowledge with practical application. The emphasis on a comprehensive understanding of international relations, conflict resolution, diplomacy, and the integration of research skills positions students well for careers in both academic and professional settings. The rapidly shifting international requirements and global political

developments pose a challenge to the programme in continuously ensuring that it meets the expectations of the professional field and the discipline. The panel appreciates that the programme regularly adjusts programme content to remain up-to-date within the parameters of the ILOs.

Advanced nature

The self-evaluation reports of the ten Advanced Studies programmes under review address the differences between advanced and regular master's programmes. Most notably, the advanced master's programmes are geared towards achieving a higher level than regular master's programmes. This is evidenced by the terminology that is used; an advanced level asks for profound and critical levels of research, insight and analysis. Advanced master's courses are offered at level 600, whereas regular master's programmes offer level 500 courses. In terms of methodology and focus, the advanced programmes should be substantially more in-depth and demanding. In addition, students in advanced level programmes have to process more (complex) materials in the same amount of time as regular master students. The advanced level is also reflected in the expectation of a high academic level in the advanced master thesis which is expected to be more extensive or generally based on more complex materials than a thesis produced in a regular master's programme.

The panel discussed extensively what the label 'Advanced Studies' of the MIRD programme entails exactly with various stakeholders of the programme, including the students. Throughout the site visit, a range of different interpretations of an advanced programme were given. The panel was informed by some interviewees that it starts with the selection process that targets prospective students who are motivated, have relevant work experience and/or already successfully graduated from a master's programme. Others highlighted the curricula themselves in which students encounter a higher course level, a higher workload, (possible) higher learning gain and overall greater intensity than in a regular master's programme. The diverse and international peer groups were also mentioned as a key characteristic of an advanced programme. Overall, based on the variety of interpretations, the panel concludes that there is not yet a shared

definition of the advanced nature of the programmes. The panel therefore recommends MIRD to – in close collaboration with Leiden Law School - clearly define Advanced Studies, in order to make it a strong(er) label, to ensure consistent messaging towards all stakeholders, and to be able to manage the expectations of prospective students accordingly (see Standard 2).

The panel acknowledges and confirms that MIRD can be considered advanced in terms of the level, the intensity of the courses, in depth qualitative and quantitative methodology and the mandatory internship. Students informed the panel that MIRD enables them to absorb knowledge rapidly and obtain a professional skillset for the field, providing them with a 'competitive edge' in the job market. Most MIRD students have limited or no work experience in international relations or diplomacy and need to develop a foundation in these areas before gaining in-depth and rigorous knowledge and understanding. Together with the combination of academic aspects and practice, this justifies the programme spanning two years.

Conclusion

Meets the standard

The panel concludes that the general direction and ambition of the programme correspond to labour market needs and equips graduates to pursue a further career in academia, should they wish to do so. MIRD meets the needs of the relevant (international) diplomatic organisations as well as academic developments and trends.

Furthermore, the panel finds that there is a very clear tie-in between the intended learning outcomes and the programme level and orientation.

A general recommendation for all Advanced Studies programmes is to formulate a clear definition of what the 'advanced' label at Leiden University entails. The programme is recommended to make certain that the 'Advanced label' becomes a shared definition in order to make it a strong(er) label, and to ensure consistent messaging

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 and considerations

Student intake

To achieve an advanced master's level and an international classroom, MIRD focuses on attracting talented (international) students via a rigorous selection process. The main selection criterion is the academic record of the applicants. Complementary criteria are the nature of their previous training, the match with the content of the MIRD programme and the students' motivation and capacity to engage. Several students have obtained prestigious scholarships from their country of origin or the Leiden University Excellence Scholarships.

Each programme has an admissions committee, mandated by the Faculty Board to take decisions on admission. Students are attracted from a range of countries and universities, reinforcing academic engagement of an advanced nature, based on diversity of student backgrounds. As a result, the classroom reflects a rich variety in nationalities and cultures. This significantly enhances the cross-national approach and facilitates coherence in the group which is also about learning to accept and respect (cultural) differences. According to the panel, MIRD is highly international and diverse in nature, in terms of students, staff and topics. International classrooms, with students from all over the world, have a highly beneficial effect on the teaching and discussions in class. The class reflects the rich variety of nationalities and cultures, significantly enhancing the cross-national approach and facilitating the coherence in the group.

Language of instruction

The students who are admitted come from a variety of nationalities globally. This fits with the explicit aim MIRD has to creating an international classroom in which students from different backgrounds and with different perspectives challenge and inform each

other. The panel emphasizes that the world of international relations and diplomacy transcends national borders. Teaching in English is crucial not only for shaping the international classroom effectively but English will also be the most widely used language in later professional life of the students. The English name for the programme is also in line with the ambitions and (international) discipline.

Curriculum

MIRD is a two-year full time programme of 120 EC. The curriculum is built in a sequence allowing students to gradually acquire the knowledge and skills to meet the ILOs. As the enrolling students have a varied academic background, the courses in the first year familiarise them with the essence of research and methodology in political sciences and international relations. Students with knowledge gaps in certain areas will have to work intensively during the first semester to catch up. Materials and reading lists are provided prior to the start of the programme, allowing students to catch up. The foundational courses are not too easy for students who already have expertise in the subject. Either the lectures differentiate within the course, or the group of students is split up in different classes, each with its own level.

The first year of the programme mainly focuses on acquiring knowledge and insight into the broader field of international relations and to obtain academic skills to conduct research in political sciences. Subsequently, specific themes and areas are explored in more depth, such as the theory and practice of diplomacy, international negotiations and international political economy. In terms of methodological training, mandatory courses are offered in year 1 on both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In year 2, the interactive courses *Thesis Laboratory 1* and 2 are offered to help with the actual thesis research.

The combination of rigorous qualitative and quantitative methodology leads students to develop

a profound and broad expertise in research methodology, which is reflected in the advanced level of the master thesis in year 2. In the thesis, students integrate their knowledge obtained and methodological skills acquired with the capacity to do research; it gives students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to conduct largely independent research on a topic in the general areas of international relations and diplomacy. Topics chosen are diverse and demonstrate the breadth of the programme. Students follow the structured thesis path through 'laboratories'. For example, in the course *Research design: Thesis Lab 2*, students develop a research proposal. This course includes drafting the research questions(s), planned methodologies and information to conduct the research.. Throughout the thesis trajectory, students have a least three meetings with their supervisor.

Based on student feedback, MIRD considers changes to further improve the curriculum. For example, the Programme Advisory Committee (EdCom) advised to increase diversity of topics covered in the curriculum. This led to an increased number of electives, covering many topics. In both years of the programme, students are offered electives to help creating individual profiles. As a response to increased request by students, the number of electives each student can attend throughout the programme has been increased from three to four. Due to the increased student numbers, MIRD was able to also add more electives to the curriculum. Despite the increased options, students occasionally feel that certain substantive aspects could be even better included in the core curriculum, such as attention for specific geographical areas. To offer students with even more opportunities to tailor-make their own programme, MIRD offers extra-curricular activities that specifically focus on those issues.

The sequence of the courses reflects the gradual implementation of the overall programme ILOs. MIRD provided the panel with a detailed overview of the way the ILO's are integrated into the courses. Student feedback might lead to changes in the placement of certain courses to better fit the curriculum as a whole. For example, the internship was initially offered at the end of the second year,

but seems to serve its purpose much better at the end of the first year.

The panel is impressed by the structured and progressive curriculum that effectively enables students to meet the ILOs. MIRD focuses on thorough academic training in international relations and diplomacy and emphasises related disciplines (economics, psychology, international law, history). The panel concludes that the MIRD programme covers a broad range of subjects, allowing students to achieve a broad and solid basis and to tailor the programme to their personal interest. According to the panel, MIRD is well aware that regular updates to the course content and structure are necessary to adapt to global political developments and evolving professional standards. Fostering a more dynamic integration of contemporary issues and challenges into the curriculum could further enhance the programme's responsiveness to global changes.

Professional practice of diplomacy and international relations

The Clingendael Institute's international networks and multiple connections with the world of diplomacy provide links between MIRD's academic studies and the professional practice of international relations and diplomacy. Faculty members at Clingendael introduce students to a variety of current themes, challenges and issues in international affairs in courses and seminars that can vary from year to year. The students and programme benefit greatly from this connection with Clingendael, the panel believes that this establishes a solid connection between the academy and practice.

The three-month mandatory MIRD internship, during which students work on individual assignments, allows them to become familiar with real-life challenges that (international) organisations in diplomacy are facing. To assist students in finding relevant internship positions, MIRD provides internship assistance. This includes collecting information about internship opportunities and supporting students throughout the application process. The programme clearly provides a lot of support and guidance and meets with individual students to help them with fulfil their ambitions. Also, at the start of the programme, a network event, the alumni gala, is organised to help students get

acquainted with possible career paths and to provide network opportunities. Although students value this support, it remains difficult, time consuming and stressful to find an internship position. Although most students eventually manage to find one, they mentioned to the panel that it requires a disproportionate amount of time and effort. This means that other topics and courses receive less attention and/or the study load is too high during that period.

Before starting the internship, students have to draft an internship plan, including (personal) learning outcomes. The programme verifies the internship plan and closely monitors the experiences of the students throughout the internship. During the internship, the programme keeps in touch with the student, which is particularly important when students go abroad. This guidance by the internship-coordinators is appreciated by the students; they feel supported and are confident that help would be provided in problematic situations. Afterwards, students have to write an internship research paper showing they achieved their learning objectives.

The panel believes that the ambition of combining a current academic programme, research skills and professional practice is successfully translated into the coherent curriculum. The integration of rigorous academic education with practical experiences, such as internships and the collaboration with the Clingendael Institute ensures a rich, real-world learning experience. The mandatory internship is clearly an added value, as became clear from the interview with students. Students value the internship as it allows them to apply their knowledge in a professional context.

Occasionally, a student does not manage to find an internship. During the pandemic, this number significantly increased, enforcing the programme management to provide an alternative to the internship. In the first Covid-19-year, students worked on research papers, which resulted in the publication of a joint book. This opportunity to write a research paper is still available if students do not manage to find an internship.

Although the panel appreciates that an alternative to the internship is offered, it has some criticism

regarding the chosen alternative. The internship is explicitly aimed at students gaining experience and learning to what extent practice matches theory. A research paper focuses on research and methodology rather than practice, so will most likely not cover the same learning objectives. In addition, not all lecturers that the panel spoke with seemed to be fully aware of the learning objectives for the internship. The panel therefore encourages the programme to consider alternative options that cover the same learning objectives for students who do not secure internships. In conclusion, the panel establishes that MIRD is able to offer a curriculum balancing courses with a strong academic focus, offering a theoretical perspective and methodological skills on the one hand, and courses with a more professional focus, allowing students to put their gained theoretical knowledge into practice. The partnership with Clingendael is a great strength in this respect.

Didactic approach

In line with Leiden University's educational mission, the MIRD programme aims to provide high level academic education in international relations with practical graduate-level education and training in international negotiations and diplomacy. Students come into targeted and intensive contact with academic research.

MIRD explicitly links research and teaching to provide students with education at the forefront of academic developments. Courses are mostly taught in the form of seminars, dealing with theory and application. Courses are interactive, following an integrated format of lecturing, presentations and discussion. Paper assignments are of an advanced nature, require critical reflections and engagement with literature and substance. Independent learning is indispensable for students to prepare for class sessions. Structured self-study is therefore an essential part of all courses. This allows for interactive and high-level academic teaching during the mandatory classes.

Students gradually develop both a specialist and more systemic understanding of international relations and diplomacy, which is refined by research methodology courses offered early on in the curriculum and developed further in each course.

The various techniques add an important element of student-centred learning, allowing students to determine their own learning process.

To help spread the workload for students across the academic year, courses sometimes are rearranged. Nevertheless, the programme is advanced and intensive, with multiple assignments and deadlines within all blocks. Although students appreciate the rapid absorption of knowledge, they also find the programme to be very intensive, particularly due to the high volume of writing assessments. Students also mention peaks in workload, for example in blocks 2 and 3 of year 1, when the courses are running and students have to look for an internship position. Although students beforehand knew that the advanced programme would be very intensive, they think further efforts to spread workload could be made. For students who are not good at time management, it might be a challenge to successfully finish the programme.

During the site visit, the students expressed strong appreciation for the blend of theoretical and practical components in the programme. On the one hand they have a lot of interaction with practitioners in the field, getting insight into how things happen in the real world. On the other hand, they are taught theory as the backbone of the programme. Another positive aspect that was mentioned by the students, is the opportunity to create an individual profile by combining elective courses, the choice for internship and thesis.

The panel thinks that the diversity of teaching methods, including seminars, interactive classes and a strong emphasis on research and methodology, fosters an engaging and intellectually stimulating environment. This is reflected in students being overall very pleased with the high quality of teaching and the truly international classroom. Furthermore, the FGGA's expertise, both in subject matter and pedagogy, and the incorporation of student feedback into curriculum development, underscore the programme's commitment to quality and relevance in international relations and diplomacy education.

Programme growth

Over the past five years, MIRD doubled in size. The growth has positive aspects as well as challenges. A positive aspect is that the increased student numbers allow for an increased number of elective courses offered. Students can now choose from 15 electives offered by MIRD. Another benefit is the upscaling of the academic staff and the support team to secure small group teaching. MIRD furthermore appointed a thesis coordinator, making it possible to allocate supervisors earlier to interact with the students on the thesis. In the self-evaluation report, MIRD points out the risk of seminars becoming less interactive in character with the increasing student numbers. The panel agrees that this is a risk that should not only be closely monitored, but should be proactively dealt with. The panel concurs with the objective of MIRD to not grow further and although further growth of the programme is not expected, it cannot be excluded either. One of the major challenges that MIRD will face with further growth, is even more students having to find an appropriate internship. The panel recommends the programme to proactively work on a strategy to deal with possible further growth.

Student support

The MIRD programme strives to offer an ambitious study culture in which involvement and commitment of students and lecturers are the norm. This implies inspiring and challenging education, active student participation and a solid organisation of the curriculum. To promote study success, measures are taken to enhance student motivation and the quality of learning, for example via annual curriculum revisions, an introduction week, career workshops, optimising timetabling and professionalising student counselling.

Given the number of nationalities in the student body, the programme has dedicated staff who are responsible for running the programme both academically and administratively, paying particular attention to the challenges of an international classroom. The diversity of the student body also means that there is a variety in backgrounds in terms of academic education. Prior to the start of the programme, students receive recommendations for supplementary literature to address any areas where they may need to catch up.

MIRD emphasises the importance of interaction among students and between students and staff. Courses have a cross-national approach and involve consideration of international academic literature and experience. Many of the staff members have – similar to the students – an international background, creating and stimulating an international learning environment. The panel commends MIRD for its significant student involvement, fostering a student-centred approach and community building within the master's programme. The main challenge facing MIRD in the future is the increase in student numbers, which poses difficulties in maintaining the interactive and personalised nature of the seminars, essential to the programme's success.

Lecturing team

The majority of teaching is conducted by lecturers appointed at Leiden University, supplemented by guest lecturers. Leiden University has heavily invested in the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ), attributing structural attention to the teacher professionalisation process. All lecturers at Leiden University are required to obtain a UTQ, this includes requirements on the level of English.

The MIRD programme can make use of lecturers from three institutes, which helps in getting not only lecturing staff with the right qualifications, but also sufficient staff to guarantee small scale and interactive teaching. During the site visit it was mentioned by the MIRD management that it is not difficult to find qualified lecturing staff as most candidates are looking forward to teach the motivated, ambitious and selected group of students.

Each course has a course-coordinator, which is a member of the academic faculty staff. Although MIRD does not work with guest lectures on a regular basis, they offer a valuable addition in, for example, diplomacy courses and visits to international organisations like the United Nations in Geneva.

According to the panel, teaching staff comprises of a wide range of expertise and is well qualified to lecture on the topics covered, both in research expertise, theoretical knowledge and in offering insights from practice (cases). The requirement of the teaching qualification (UTQ) ensures the quality level of teaching. Teaching methods vary to suit the nature of courses; the experience and insights from teachers enhances the quality of education. The panel appreciates that guest lecturers are invited when they bring added value to the programme.

Conclusion

Meets the standard

The structure and progressive curriculum effectively enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes. MIRD combines thorough and current academic training in a broad range of subjects with professional practice in its curriculum. Both the connection to the Clingendael institute and the mandatory internships are considered strengths of the programme. Teaching staff comprises of a wide range of expertise and didactic qualifications. According to the panel, the alternative to the internship requires attention in order to achieve the same learning objectives as the internship itself. Study load is high and somewhat unevenly distributed throughout the year.

MIRD is highly international and diverse in nature, in terms of students, staff and topics. This fits in with the world of international relations and diplomacy, which transcends national borders. MIRD clearly fosters a student-centered approach and community building. Diversity of teaching methods provides an intellectually stimulating environment. Student numbers increase, leading to both advantages and challenges. MIRD should proactively prepare for further growth in order to continue its high quality teaching, for example the interactive nature of the seminars.

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings and considerations

System of assessment

In its Rules and Regulations, the MIRD programme describes its course and examination regulations. MIRD has created a matrix in which it shows which (part of) the ILOs is assessed in a specific course. Collectively, the courses cover all ILOs of the MIRD programme. For each course, assessment matrices are made in order to safeguard the continuity of the level and scope of the assessments. The grading of courses is mostly based on written assignments, including short essays, in which students reflect on theoretical developments in the field or summarise existing research. Paper assignments are of an advanced nature, usually incorporating critical engagement with literature. Several courses require students to give presentations or do conduct research.

According to the panel, MIRD boasts a comprehensive and structured assessment system. It is marked by its use of advanced assessment matrices and diverse forms of evaluation, including written assignments, presentations, and research papers. This system not only requires high engagement from students but also closely aligns with the programme's ILO's. Transparency in grading is ensured through detailed descriptions of assessment methods and criteria, communicated at the course's onset in the syllabus, alongside an effective feedback mechanism facilitated by tangible grading forms and written comments.

In the student chapter, it is mentioned that "the convergence of deadlines can present a formidable challenge, requiring students to manage a demanding schedule effectively". This might put a strain on the wellbeing of students when deadlines are consistently converging. During the site visit, students furthermore mentioned that it is an essay-based programme. Writing is a major part of the assessments and one has to like writing and be good

at it. Writing essays does help them to really engage in the topic and help them learn.

Course papers often require reporting on theory, hypotheses, results, and conclusions of a specific analysis. Assignments are of an advance nature, requiring critical reflections and engagement with literature and substance. The panel believes that the assessment methods used in MIRD adequately consider various ways to assess students' performances. They include active participation, essays, oral presentations, discussion/debates with stakeholders, open and closed book exams and assessments. Each of the courses has its own method of assessment, sometimes very differential. The panel was impressed by innovative assessments, such as co-authored "mini-essays" and "opinion articles" in the Diplomacy course. Writing in teams is a reality that students will face when leaving university and having some experience in this area will be invaluable.

The panel thinks that there may be issues of scaling quality assessments with growing student numbers, in particular maintaining the high quality of personalised feedback and assessment. The panel stimulates the programme to explore more strategies to ensure that the quality of interaction and personalised feedback does not diminish as class sizes grow. This could involve the use of technology, peer review systems, or attracting additional teaching assistants.

The lecturing staff actively engages in discussions, both among themselves and with students, about the benefits and risks of using AI (e.g., ChatGPT). So far, no issues were encountered in MIRD courses. Although university-wide regulations are in place, developments go very fast, MIRD thinks that it is important to discuss with students from the very start of the programme how to use and not abuse ChatGPT. The panel agrees and thinks that even a more proactive approach should be in place because MIRD strongly relies on written assessment.

Thesis assessment

Thesis grading follows a common procedure used across all advanced programmes. Each thesis is graded by the thesis supervisor and a second, independent reviewer. The assessment form requires reviewers to evaluate various components, such as the strength of the research question(s) and the methodology used to address them. If there is a disagreement between the two reviewers, the Board of Examiners (BoE) intervenes and appoints a third reviewer to provide an independent assessment of the thesis. The theses are furthermore subject to an audit by the BoE.

Based on the interviews, the panel is convinced that the thesis assessment process at MIRD is done well and independently. The main criticism is the fact that in the documentation the panel read before the site visit, it was not transparent that the assessment by the two reviewers is done independently. Interviews during the site visit clarified that both supervisors independently review and assess the thesis before discussing the final grade. The panel recommends to make this process transparent in the procedures.

Quality assurance of assessment

Leiden University has established an exam commission structure that makes the Board of Examiners (BoE) independent from the Dean and/or programme board. For MIRD, the BoE is an integral part of the institutional framework of FGGA. Important responsibilities for the BoE are a supervisory responsibility with regard to the final exam, examinations and tests, enforcing regulations, granting exemptions from the rules in individual cases and advisory tasks. The MIRD BoE consists of members of academic staff of the programme and an external member. The BoE collectively sets up rules and policy, meets regularly and is supported by the BoE-secretary. Each member of the BoE has their own specialisations.

The MIRD BoE ensures the quality of examinations, handles cases of potential fraud, and makes

decisions on exceptions or special circumstances for individual students. It furthermore aims at contributing to an environment that deals with (broader issues) on assessment, including plagiarism and issues with AI. The BoE holds weekly meetings to address any programme-related issue. Additionally, the MIRD BoE appoints individual lecturers as examiners. To be appointed as an examiner, the lecturer not only has to be an expert in his/her field, and hold a PhD, they are also required to have a UTQ. Finally, the MIRD BoE regularly performs quality checks, for example by taking random samples of theses and their assessments to ensure grading is consistent across supervisors and programme years.

The panel was impressed by the proactive attitude of the MIRD BoE and believes that it has a thorough overview of the quality of assessment in the MIRD programme. The BoE thinks along and monitors without taking the seat of the examiners or programme director.

Conclusion

Meets the standard

The assessment methods that are used adequately consider various ways to assess the students' performances. The panel was impressed by innovative assessments methods used. MIRD is recommended to prepare for further growth of student numbers, making sure that the quality of interaction and personalised feedback remain. Also, a more proactive approach to AI should be in place. The thesis assessment process in practice works well and independently. This independent role of the second reviewer should also be made transparent in the documentation. The Board of Examiners is proactive and has a thorough overview of the quality of assessments of MIRD.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings and considerations

Theses quality

The panel looked at a random selection of fifteen theses, varying in grades (high, medium, low) given by the programme. The theses showed a good level of understanding of the basics of research design, essay writing mechanics, and research. The theses are well-structured and present a clear approach. The main research questions are well connected to the theoretical framework, and the surveys with experiments add significant value. All theses the panel reviewed fulfil the objectives that have been set out by MIRD and overall show a high quality of research. In particular those theses that received very high grades were indeed exceptional. Overall, the panel was impressed by the (advanced) level of quality evident in the sample.

For the most part the MIRD examiners did an exceptional job in providing detailed feedback indicating weak points in the theses and detailing how the students could improve. There was a good level of consistency in the assessments across most of the theses and among different examiners (first and second). The overall evaluation process is completed to a high standard. The panel thinks that the (early) allocation of supervisors is also a strong point. The supervisors all seem well suited to evaluating theses both in terms of topic and methods used.

Performance in the professional field

The attainment of ILOs is reflected in the professional performance of MIRD graduates after completing the programme. Clingendael's role as a bridge between academia and the practice of diplomacy familiarises students with the practice while they attend the MIRD programme. The market for academically trained specialists in areas related to international relations, diplomacy, international security or international organisations is broad and competitive. MIRD provides students with training to

prepare for the labour market, e.g. in terms of helping with CV's, application letters and interviews. MIRD students, after graduation, acquired positions in organisations such as Ministries of Foreign Affairs, United Nations organisations, the European Commission, European Parliament or non-governmental organisations. A number of graduates successfully continued with a PhD programme.

In the review period, MIRD has set up activities that link current MIRD students with alumni of the programme, for example the annual gala event that includes a day-time and evening programme. The Brussels excursion also includes an interaction between students and alumni working in Brussels. Furthermore, MIRD has an alumni registry and active LinkedIn and Facebook pages to keep in contact with alumni.

According to the panel, graduates are able to land competitive jobs. The variety of positions held by alumni in international relations, diplomacy, and academia underscores the programme's effectiveness in preparing students for competitive job markets and further academic pursuits. The panel thinks that MIRD is doing very well in allowing students to meet alumni during the programme, leading to a close-knit MIRD community during and after graduation.

Non-European students indicate that it is more difficult for them to find a job in the Netherlands or Europe after graduating. Although the programme management is of the opinion that this is clearly mentioned at the start and during the programme, the panel suggests a bit more guidance for this particular group.

In conclusion, the panel is of the opinion that MIRD effectively demonstrates the achievement of its ILOs through high graduation rates, a rigorous thesis process and the successful engagement of graduates in professional and academic fields. Students' ability to undertake complex research and their subsequent professional successes highlight the

programme's excellence in aligning theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

Conclusion

Meets the standard

Early allocation of supervisors in the thesis trajectory is a strong point. The panel was impressed by the

(advanced) level of quality evident in the sample of theses. Overall, most first reviewers provided clear and detailed feedback in the thesis assessment. Graduates are able to find competitive jobs in the competitive job market. The panel appreciates the way that the alumni network is used to benefit students as well as alumni.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Intended Learning Outcomes

The main intellectual end qualifications of the MIRD programme can be summarized as follows; students have knowledge of and insight into:

- 1.1. the theoretical foundations of international relations, conflict resolution, and diplomacy (ILO1)
- 1.2. the theory and practice of international organization (ILO2)
- 1.3. key historical developments in international relations and diplomacy (ILO3)
- 1.4. applications of related disciplines (economics, psychology, international law, history) to international relations (ILO4)
- 1.5. research design and research methods in political science (ILO5)

The skill qualifications can be summarized as follows; students are able to:

- 2.1. formulate fundamental questions concerning international relations and diplomacy (ILO6)
- 2.2. design and execute an appropriate research strategy to develop answers to these questions using empirical evidence (ILO7)
- 2.3. reason by analogy to construct appropriate comparative analyses and evaluations of historical and contemporary processes and events in international relations (ILO8)
- 2.4. apply non-specialist knowledge from related fields to explain and understand international relations and build theoretical arguments (ILO9)
- 2.5. present academic findings in written papers, reports, and oral presentations (ILO10)

Appendix 2: Schematic overview of the curriculum

Year 1

<i>Block 1</i>	<i>Block 2</i>	<i>Block 3</i>	<i>Block 4</i>
International Relations: Theories and Approaches (10 EC)	Introduction to Diplomacy: Theory and Practice (5 EC)	International Negotiation (5 EC)	MIRD Internship (10 EC)
The European Union and the United Nations (5 EC)	Qualitative Research Methods (5 EC)	Quantitative Research Methods (5 EC)	Internship Research Paper (5 EC)
	Negotiations and Conflict Resolution (5 EC)	Elective (5 EC)	

Year 2

<i>Block 1</i>	<i>Block 2</i>	<i>Block 3</i>	<i>Block 4</i>
International Law (10 EC)	International Political Economy (10 EC)	Research Design: Thesis Lab 2 (5 EC)	MIRD Mater Thesis (15 EC)
Elective (5 EC)	Research Design: Thesis Lab 1 (5 EC)	Electives (2 x 5 EC)	

Appendix 3: Documents studied

The panel studied a wide selection of documents relating to the programme's profile and intended learning outcomes, its teaching-learning environment, assessment and end level.

These included:

- Self-assessment report (including appendices and student chapter)
- Midterm Review Report
- Course files of:
 - MIRD Diplomacy Course
 - MIRD EU_UN Course
 - MIRD IR Theories
- Master's theses of fifteen graduates
- NVAO recommendations 2018 and changes
- Course Descriptions and Assessments (Academic Year 2023/2024)
- Course Schedule Overview
- Student Statistics and Enrolment 2018 -2023 including Enrolment versus Graduation Rates 2018 -2023
- Overview of Teaching Staff – (Academic Year 2023/2024) including staff C.V.'s
- Benchmarking report for like programmes national and international
- Programme Vision and Development
- Subject Specific Reference Framework and Learning Outcomes of the Programme Course Levels
- Thesis Guidelines
- Rules and Regulations (Academic Year 2023/2024)
- Mid Term Review Report
- Mid Term Plan of Action
- Exam Commission Annual Report 2022- 2023
- PAC Reports 2022 - 2023

Appendix 4: Site visit schedule

February 27

14.00 – 16.00 Online meeting panel with Faculty Boards and Management of Leiden Law School and Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs

March 4

17.00 – 19.00 Kick-off meeting panel

March 5

Humanities programmes

09.00 – 10.00 Meeting with the programme management Humanities programmes (EIHRL, ICR, PIL)

10.05 – 11.05 Meetings with students and alumni Humanities programmes (EIHRL, ICR, PIL)

11.15 – 12.15 Meeting with lecturers Humanities programmes (EIHRL, ICR, PIL)

12.15 – 13.15 Lunch

International Relations

13.15 – 14.00 Meeting with the programme management MIRD programme

14.15 – 15.00 Meeting with students and alumni MIRD programme

15.15 – 16.00 Meeting with lecturers MIRD programme

16.00 – 17.00 Panel meeting on preliminary findings Humanities (EIHRL, ICR, PIL) and MIRD programmes

March 6

Business programmes

08.45 – 09.45 Meeting with the programme management Business programmes (EIBL, ICCL L&F)

10.00 – 11.00 Meetings with students and alumni Business programmes (EIBL, ICCL L&F)

11.15 – 12.15 Meeting with lecturers Business programmes (EIBL, ICCL L&F)

12.15 – 13.00 Panel meeting on preliminary findings Business programmes (EIBL, ICCL L&F)

13.00 – 14.30 Development dialogue including lunch (two sessions with two questions per session)

Multidisciplinary programmes

15.00 – 16.00 Meeting with the programme management multidisciplinary programmes (A&SL, IDSA, L&DT)

16.15 – 17.15 Meeting with students and alumni multidisciplinary programmes (A&SL, IDSA, L&DT)

17.15 – 18.15 Meeting with lecturers multidisciplinary programmes (A&SL, IDSA, L&DT)

18.15 – 18.45 Panel meeting on preliminary findings multidisciplinary programmes (A&SL, IDSA, L&DT)

March 7

09.00 – 09.30 Panel meeting

09.30 – 10.45 Meeting with Exam Commission and Programme Advisory Committee (LLS/FGGA)

10.45 – 11.30 Panel meeting: preparation final meeting with management

11.30 – 12.15 Meeting with management

12.15 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 16.30 Panel meeting: preliminary findings /judgments all programmes

16.30 – 17.00 Feedback panel on preliminary findings

17.00 End of site visit