

History (research) (MA)

Master



Universiteit
Leiden

Discover the world at Leiden University

Specialisations

- Ancient History (research) (MA)
- Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence (research) (MA)
- Colonial and Global History (research) (MA)
- Europe 1000-1800 (research) (MA)
- Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the Present (research) (MA)

The research master in History at Leiden University offers five specialisations in which you will focus on historical processes, historical research, historiography and methodology.



A top-ranking programme

According to the [QS World University Rankings 2025](#), History at Leiden University is rated 1st in the Netherlands and 18th in the world.

Why study History Research MA at Leiden University?

The two-year research master in History at Leiden University offers you the chance to determine a study based on your own particular interests and ambitions. During your studies you will experience the riches and challenges of academia not only via frequent meetings with your tutor, but also during the seminars in which staff members and research master's students discuss one another's research findings and exchange scholarly views and insights.

[Learn more about the study programme](#)

Is this programme for you?

If you are interested in dedicating more time to in-depth research, or are thinking of a future in academic or non-academic research, you should consider choosing the Research MA over the MA. A love for reading and discussing intensively with your fellow students, as well as conducting your own research, is essential. If, moreover, you are ambitious and not averse to hard intellectual work, you have what it takes to complete this programme successfully.

Join an active student community

As a Research MA student, you will become part of a close-knit community of other students across the different History Research MA specialisations. A dedicated Research MA room provides a quiet place to study and keep your books on campus, as well as camaraderie with your fellow Research MA students. Monthly drinks and other activities give you a chance to make friends, create collaborations, and build your academic network.

Participate in the Europaeum Vaclav Havel MA Programme

Selected students will also be able to participate in the Europaeum Vaclav Havel MA Programme, an initiative of Leiden University in cooperation with the Sorbonne (Paris), the Jagiellonian University of Kraków and Charles University in Prague which leads to a separate additional master certificate in European Society and Politics issued by the Europaeum Association of leading European Universities.

Admission and Application

Do you want to find out if you are eligible for this Master's programme?

[Check the entry requirements](#)

Study abroad

You are encouraged to spend the third semester of your research master's abroad taking optional courses and conducting research for your thesis. Leiden University has a large network of options for your studies abroad.

[Find out more about the career prospects](#)



History (research) degree

History (research) at Leiden University is an accredited degree programme. After successful completion of this programme, you will receive a research master's degree in History and the title Master of Arts (MA).

Chat with a student

Do you have a question about student life in Leiden, studying at Leiden University, or do you want more information about the History master's programme? [Chat with a current student for answers to your questions!](#)

Why Leiden University

Leiden University offers ambitious students a world-class environment in which to reach their full potential.

A top-ranked programme

The Leiden Institute for History is rated 1st in the Netherlands and 18th in the world in the QS World University Rankings 2025.

Access to unique resources

At Leiden University, the oldest university in the Netherlands, you can access resources found nowhere else in the world, such as those of the famous Leiden University Library and its collections of original manuscripts and periodicals.

An ideal location for the study of history

Leiden University offers you one of the best locations from which to explore and study the world, as well as start your career. Our historical location close to The Hague brings you within easy reach of the country's seat of government, politics, and international organisations, as well as the unique resources of the Dutch National Library and the National Archives, with its extensive collections.

An individual approach to learning

Leiden University's History department has a committed teaching staff who are both outstanding researchers and dedicated teachers consistently ranked highly by their own students. Small classes and intensive one-on-one mentoring give all our students the extra stimulation and support to go the extra step in their performance and their ideas for their future.

Access to the Humanities Hub labs

As a Humanities master's student you will have access to the Humanities Hub which comprises labs with digital facilities for both students and researchers. The labs include an AI Lab, Media lab, film studio and podcast studio and give you the opportunity to develop your digital and media skills within the field of the humanities. Check the [Humanities Hub](#) page for a full list of all the labs and facilities.



Humanities Hub Leiden

Specialist chairs

Leiden's History department has chairs in:

- Ancient History
- Medieval History
- Dutch History
- Early Modern History
- Contemporary History
- Europe after 1945

- American History
- African History
- Colonial and Global History
- Maritime History
- History of Global Economic Networks
- Social History
- Migration History
- Comparative Urban History

Adjacent departments in the Faculty of Humanities have chairs in International Studies, Latin American History, Brazilian Studies, African, Turkish, Indonesian, Indian, Korean, Chinese and Japanese History.

Diversity and inclusion

We are convinced that our education can only flourish if everyone within the programme feels supported, respected and empowered to do their best work. We find it important to offer a learning environment that allows for different perspectives and points of view that students bring with them, depending on their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, health, religion, age or socio-economic background. Every new generation sees the world from a new perspective – and our students are the newest generation. [We look forward to hearing more about your perspective.](#) Leiden University has been pursuing diversity policy since 2014, with the aim of creating a diverse and inclusive learning and working environment for all staff and students.

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About the Programme

During the two-year History (Research) programme you will learn from inspired academics and learn how to conduct quality research.

Although the main focus of the programme is on your chosen specialisation, it also includes a number of courses enabling you to acquire a better understanding of theories on historical processes, historical debates and methodology of historical research. In the first semester, you will follow a course in historical methodology, in the second semester a course in developing research proposals.

Literature Seminar

The programme starts with an intensive literature seminar, which covers the first 8 weeks of the semester. During this course you will discuss recent insights and key issues within your specialisation. The literature seminar is valued at 10 EC.

Research Seminars

You will follow two research seminars within your specialisation during which you will carry out research on the basis of original source material or published documents. You will take one research seminar during the first semester. The second research seminar may be taken during the second semester, or abroad during the third semester. Each research seminar is valued at 10 EC.

Historical Theory

This course is compulsory for all Research MA students. It discusses major problems in historical theory or philosophy of history through close readings of relevant texts. Topics that will be addressed include explanations, models, intentions, representations, narratives, paradigms, comparisons, objectivity, and ethics. The course is valued at 10 EC.

Developing Research Proposals

This course focuses on writing a research proposal. You will discuss various types of successful research projects and reflect upon the organisation of academic research. You will develop your own proposal, developing a good research question and including debate, feasibility, and innovative character. The course will guide you through this process. Senior researchers will visit the class to comment upon their own ongoing research projects. The course is valued at 10 EC and is compulsory for all Research MA students.

Tutorial

The tutorial is the mainstay of our Research MA as it offers intensive, eye-to-eye discussions with one of Leiden's many specialists. During the tutorial you will explore the field and determine the subject and research question of your thesis. The tutorial is valued at 10 EC.

Courses Research Schools

Within the Research MA History, you will take courses at a national Research School, amounting to at least 10 EC. You will compose this set of courses yourself, together with the Coordinator of Studies. Research Schools courses offer training in both methodology and area specific knowledge. Research MA students choose courses at the Research school that relates most with their possible area of research.

Optional Courses

You will also choose a number of optional courses, worth up to a total of 20 EC. You are advised to study these courses abroad. The optional courses may also be spent on a research internship, or at courses (level 500) offered at any department of Leiden University or at another Dutch university.

Thesis

The programme concludes with a thesis, based on original source research and a final oral exam. Together they are valued at 30 EC. The level of the thesis will have to meet high standards. In principle, the (shortened) thesis will have to be worthy of publication in an academic journal. During the final ceremony you are expected to present and defend your thesis vis-à-vis with your thesis supervisor and a second examiner.

The main aim of the programme is to ensure that after graduation, you will be able to function as a junior academic researcher, either in a semi-academic position or at a university. You will be able to solve complex academic problems independently, critically and creatively, and report on these results with clarity both in writing and verbally. The programme qualifies you to continue your studies in a PhD studentship.

Latest knowledge

All courses are taught by academics who are active researchers. The curriculum is regularly updated to reflect contemporary academic debates and the very latest insights. Regular seminars are held presenting students with our researchers' latest findings. Your research thesis is often linked to one of the research projects of our faculty members, who play an active role in every individual's education, acting as mentors and community builders.

Detailed programme

For a detailed programme, see the [Prospectus](#). Please note that this guide applies to the current academic year, which means that the curriculum for next year may slightly differ.

Prof.dr. Gert Oostindie

Professor of Colonial and Postcolonial History



“The least any professor of History can do beyond simply teaching students the methods, contents and ethics of the discipline is to help them reflect on why all of this might be helpful for understanding not simply the past, but also the present. As a frequent contributor to the mass media I feel historians have something substantial to add to public debates and in my teaching I do attempt to stimulate my students to think about this, and to develop the requisite skills.”

Extracurricular

Get the most out of your studies at Leiden University by taking part in our extracurricular activities.

Social and academic programme events

We want you to be part of the academic community that is formed by our staff. As a student you will be invited to take part in our social and academic gatherings. Among those are gatherings where members of staff present new research.

Studying abroad

Studying abroad is an option during your master in History. If you wish to take optional courses and/or write your thesis abroad, Leiden University offers a wide range of options for spending part of your studies abroad. The International Office of the Faculty of Humanities will be able to help you make the right decision for your time studying abroad.

Uhlenbeck scholarship programme

For research master's students, the Faculty of Humanities has set up the Uhlenbeck scholarship programme. If you would like to spend a period of time abroad for field work, research or a study exchange, you can apply for a (supplementary) scholarship.

Leiden Leadership Programme

Are you interested in developing your leadership potential? The [Leiden Leadership Programme](#) (LLP) is an Honours Programme specifically developed for ambitious master's students at Leiden University and the Delft University of Technology who recognise the importance of leadership abilities. The LLP offers in-depth training sessions, assessments, seminars, and the creation of a Personal Leadership Roadmap – a five-year plan for reaching and developing your leadership potential.

Study at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts

The Academy of the Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) is a research institute and part of the Faculty of Humanities. The ACPA offers education such as electives, and talent programmes such as the Practicum Artium (PA), which gives you the opportunity to study photography, graphic design or drawing, and the Practicum Musicae at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, where you can study classical music, singing, early music or jazz.

[Find out more about ACPA.](#)

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Career prospects

What our graduates do

- PhD candidate at a university in England
- PhD candidate at a Dutch university
- Assistant publisher at a large publishing house
- Online content specialist at a PR company
- Project officer for video and audio-visual collections at a provincial archive

- Policy officer at a city council
- Researcher and teaching staff member at Leiden University
- Communications advisor at a consultancy firm
- Coordinating strategy advisor at a ministry of security and justice
- Curator at a gallery

Your qualifications

As a graduate of the History (research) programme at Leiden University, you will be qualified to work as a junior academic researcher – either in a semi-academic position or at a university. You will be able to solve complex academic problems independently, critically and creatively, and report on these results with clarity both in writing and verbally.

If you are interested in a career outside of academics you will discover that the depth and scope of the research master in History allows you to successfully venture on a career in education, administration, heritage, journalism, business, and many more.

Teacher qualification

Are you interested in pursuing a career in education? Then you may apply for the Dutch-taught teacher-training MA at the ICLON Graduate School of Education after graduating from the master's programme. To be admitted, you need to have a master's degree in the relevant discipline. Fluency in Dutch is mandatory and additional entry requirements may apply.

Merle van Lier

Graduated in Colonial and Global History (Research MA History)



I am currently affiliated with Het Scheepvaartmuseum in Amsterdam as a Prof. J.C.M. Warnsinck fellow. Here I am conducting research on early modern Dutch maps and atlases from the collection for six months. In the meantime, I am getting an extensive look behind the scenes of this beautiful museum and working together with other fellows and colleagues from the Collection Development and Research department.

My research at the museum builds on my master's thesis. I am continuing where I left off and where I did not have the space/time for in my thesis. The research skills and background knowledge that I learned during my studies are therefore very useful. I also built up a professional network during my studies that I can now make good use of.

I really enjoy doing research. I found one year too short to complete a master's degree. The ResMA lasts two years and has given me the space to delve deeper and develop my academic skills even more. That also turned out to be the ideal preparation for my fellowship!

For students considering this master's, I would say check the study guide! The content of the subjects says much more about the education that is offered than the names of the specialisations. With the help of the study guide you know much better what to expect.

Career preparation

Find out how this programme exactly prepares you for your future career and check our career preparation activities.

The research master's programme in History at Leiden University aims to equip you with a range of important skills and knowledge that will help you achieve your personal career goals. Whichever your area of expertise, you will have a broad and global context to your knowledge and critical-thinking skills that can be applied to the most complex conceptual problems.

Many of our students choose to do an internship during their study. Internships are a great way to gain invaluable first-hand experience in your area of interest before you decide on making it a career. In recent years students from the research master's programme in History have been doing internships at the following organisations:

- Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands
- KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies)
- Dutch Embassy in Jakarta
- Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie
- Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael
- Maritime Museum Rotterdam
- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Security and Justice

Our staff can help you identify both the career that is right for you, and the necessary steps to get you there. Our team at the [Humanities Career Service](#) provides all Leiden University humanities students with professional advice and guidance on everything from internships and career planning to job applications. Humanities Career Service also organises regular workshops on topics such as effective interview skills and creating a successful CV.

The Humanities Career Service offers you various (online) workshops, webinars and info sessions. [Check our overview of career activities](#).

The [Leiden University Career Zone](#) is an online career portal that helps you to prepare for the job market. Here you can find information, tools and tips to help you gain more personal insight, learn about the job market, develop your application skills, plan your academic and professional career, find job vacancies and discover what the [Career Service](#) can do for you.

Join the [Mentor Network](#) to contact alumni with experience on the labour market and ask them for advice. More than 1200 alumni are happy to help you!

Jelle on finding an internship via Leiden University's Mentor Network

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Admission and Application

We invite motivated students from around the world to apply for the Master of Arts in History (Research). Admission requirements may vary per specialisation, please visit the specialisation of your interest to find out more about the entry requirements.

- [Ancient History \(research\)](#)
- [Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence \(research\)](#)
- [Colonial and Global History \(research\)](#)
- [Europe 1000-1800 \(research\)](#)
- [Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the Present \(research\)](#)

Student life

Your time at Leiden is about more than just studying. Some of your best experiences will stem from being a part of our lively and diverse student community, as well as from life in the beautiful city of Leiden.

The study associations related to History are:

- [HSVl](#) for all specialisations. Contact via info@dehsvl.nl.
- [MVSL Floris V](#) for Europe 1000-1800. Contact via bestuur.msvlflorisv@gmail.com.

Humanities Master's Buddy Programme

The Humanities Master's Buddy Programme has been set up by the Faculty of Humanities to help all students who are new to the university to integrate quickly and easily into university life. You will be matched to a buddy who can help you out with your academic and practical questions. Additionally you will be able to attend fun monthly activities and make friends from all over the world.

For more information about the Buddy Programme, please visit the [Humanities Buddy Programme page](#).



Humanities Master's Buddy Programme

International Student Associations

Leiden has several student organisations that specifically cater for international students. These associations organise regular social events and activities that help create the strong sense of community that exists within our international student body. The main two organisations are:

Erasmus Student Network Leiden (ESN)

[ESN Leiden](#) is an international student organisation which hosts a range of activities and programmes. They also have a buddy programme which provides new students with the right support to assimilate into Leiden and the university.

AEGEE Leiden

[AEGEE](#) is a leading European student association with sister organisations in over 40 countries across Europe. AEGEE organises many activities in Leiden, from dinners and pool nights to boat trips and guest lectures.

For an overview of all of our student associations, please visit our [Student associations page](#).

Welcome and orientation programme

In August and February each year, Leiden University hosts the English-language [Orientation Week Leiden \(OWL\)](#), which welcomes both international and Dutch students. The OWL is an excellent way to get to know Leiden University, the city, and other students.

Life in Leiden

Picturesque and the perfect size, Leiden is the ideal place to spend your university days. The Faculty of Humanities is located within the heart of the city, where dozens of cafes, shops and bars line its historic laneways and leafy canals. Small enough to run into familiar faces, but big enough to keep offering surprises – you will treasure your time at Leiden. And for adventures further afield, the major cities of The Hague and Amsterdam are a short train ride away, along with Schiphol Airport, which is just half an hour away by train.

Our study and student associations organise a huge variety of social, cultural, and study events to keep you busy all year round. You can also join the University Sports Centre, which offers scheduled group sports and fitness classes, amongst other activities.

Information activities

Get to know us through our online and in-person events for prospective students!



Two speakers at the open day

Are you thinking about joining this Master's programme, and want to determine if it will be the right fit for you? Below, you can browse the events that we have coming up, and sign up to experience Leiden University and the programme for yourself. Alternatively, take a look at the Master Talks videos to find out more about the programme or check out our virtual campus tours!

Upcoming events

Master's Open Days

During the Master's Open Days you'll have the opportunity to learn all about Leiden University's master's programmes. Attend presentations about your chosen programme(s) or practical matters such as admissions

and housing. Get real insight into the content of your preferred master's, along with the career opportunities it will bring.

When are the next Open Days?

- [9 & 10 October 2025: Master's Online Open Days](#)
- [6 February 2026: Master's On Campus Open Day](#)

Master Talks: Programme videos

On the [Master Talks: programme videos platform](#) you can find videos for each master's programme. This includes a video which gives a short introduction to the programme. You can also find the recording of the previous Master's Online Open Days and watch the programme presentation on the platform.

Get to know the campus

Check out our virtual campus tours, filmed in 360 degrees – by dragging the video, you can look around at the surroundings yourself. Below is the video recorded at the Humanities faculty, where most of your lectures will take place; you can also view other 360 campus tours of the various university faculties [here](#).

360 Campus tour: the Humanities faculty

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Contact

If you have a question, there are various ways to get in touch with us.

This website and our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) are the quickest ways to find an answer to many of your questions.

Questions about the Programme

Coordinator of studies

Email: mahistory@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Student ambassador

Enid Holweg

Email: e.holweg@me.com

Questions about the application procedure, tuition fees and scholarships

Student Affairs Front Office

Phone: +31 (0)71 527 80 11

Email: [Contact form](#)

Or visit their [website](#)

Visiting address

Leiden: Plexus Student Centre

Kaiserstraat 25, ground floor

2311 GN Leiden

Monday to Friday between 11.00 and 16.00, Tuesday between 11.00 and 17.30.

Chat with a student

Do you have a question about student life in Leiden, studying at Leiden University, or do you want more information about the History master's programme? Chat with a current student for answers to your questions!