

International Relations (MA)

Master



Universiteit
Leiden

Discover the world at Leiden University

Specialisations

- Culture and Politics (MA)
- European Union Studies (MA)
- Global Conflict in the Modern Era (MA)
- Global Order in Historical Perspective (MA)
- Global Political Economy (MA)

Understanding the complexities of world affairs requires an ability to think critically and to draw insights from a variety of perspectives, sources, and analytic frames. Leiden University's Master of Arts in International Relations addresses these needs through distinctive humanities-based training in international relations that draws on the University's internationally-recognised strengths.

Master International Relations at Leiden University

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Why study International Relations at Leiden University?

You will join the only master's programme in the Netherlands to offer five unique specialisations within the field of international relations. With a broad curriculum and flexible design, the Master's degree in International Relations allows you to tailor your degree to suit your career goals. You will be able to specialise in areas ranging from the European integration process to the global political economy to the pursuit of global justice.

The programme is unique in its embrace of a humanities-based approach to international relations. Ideas in world politics are combined with historiographical, cultural, and area studies teaching and research. This approach demonstrates how humankind in all its variety makes sense of the world and how international relations shapes social conditions and systems of meaning across and within countries. This will help you become a well-rounded professional who is prepared to tackle the challenges and opportunities in the field of international relations.

[Learn more about the study programme](#)

What are your career prospects?

This Master's prepares you for a wide range of roles in almost every sector of the job market. Our graduates work at different types of organisations, such as research institutes, international organisations, government bodies, NGOs and academia. Jobs include policy advisor, consultant, communications manager and spokesperson.

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

Is International Relations the programme for you?

Are you interested in international relations? Do you want to know how history and culture influence world politics? Then International Relations at Leiden University is the right Master's programme for you. Find out if you are eligible for this Master's programme by checking the admission requirements.

[Check the admission requirements](#)

Do a second MA at Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe: School of Advanced International Studies

Due to a special agreement, students with a Leiden MA degree in International Relations can earn a second degree at the European Campus of Johns Hopkins University SAIS in Bologna, Italy. Successful applicants gain access to the second year of the research focused Master of Arts in International Affairs (MAIA) and will be given a full year's credit towards this two-year MA. The programme is research-orientated and allows students to personalise their curriculum and focus on the contemporary issues in international affairs aligned with their career interests. The courses offered at SAIS Europe emphasise economics, political science, history and foreign language proficiency, providing a cross-disciplinary approach.

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 International Relations Master's programme?

[Chat with a current student for answers to your questions!](#)

Why Leiden University

A top-ranked university

Leiden University's Humanities department consistently ranks in the top 30 Humanities departments worldwide in the THE World University Ranking. 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 international relations

Leiden University offers you one of the best locations from which to explore and study the world, as well as launch your career. Our location close to The Hague, the legal capital of the world, brings you within easy reach of some of Europe and the Netherlands' most important political and international organisations.

A centre of scholarly expertise

At Leiden University, we are among the leading centres in Europe for the study of international relations, with the largest concentration of scholarly expertise anywhere in the Netherlands. Many of our staff members enrich their research and teaching with additional insights garnered from their experience working in government, NGOs and other international organisations.

An individual approach to learning

At Leiden University we have a dedicated team of researchers in the field of International Relations. All classes are taught by accomplished scholars at Leiden. Small classes ensure every student has valuable time interacting with lecturers, each of whom is personally invested in you and developing your potential.

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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Humanities-Based International Relations

Leiden University's MA in International Relations offers a humanities-based approach to international relations blending ideas in world politics with **historiographical**, **cultural**, and **area studies** teaching and research in ways that connect global and local processes and dynamics.

History

Through its focus on history the programme aims to understand the human record across time and place. To understand the history of international relations entails analysis of the role of ideas in the world and in the field of international relations itself.

Culture

The programme's attention to culture brings to light the myriad ways in which the realm of the international is understood, lived, and experienced. A focus on culture also highlights how culture is produced and can be used as a political instrument, and how human expressive activities and practices intersect with relations of power.

Area studies

The strengths in area studies permit in-depth explorations across and within world regions and an appreciation of the world's diversity and interdependence. The programme's area studies scholars address a variety of historical and contemporary themes, exploring social, political, economic, and cultural features of world regions.

About the programme

The one-year Master's in International Relations offers an exciting and challenging mix of theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

Choose one of 5 specialisations:

- [Culture and Politics](#)
- [European Union Studies](#)
- [Global Conflict in the Modern Era](#)
- [Global Order in Historical Perspective](#)
- [Global Political Economy](#)

Programme structure

Semester 1

Core Course (10 EC)

[Humanities-Based International Relations](#) (5 EC)

[Thesis and Methods in International Relations Research](#) (5 EC)

Electives (10 EC)

Semester 2

[Regions in World Politics](#) (5 EC)

Thesis (15 EC)

Electives (10 EC)

Master's thesis

The Thesis and Methods course is made to prepare you for writing a Master's thesis. The course introduces you to core conceptual, methodological and theoretical issues that you encounter when you are working on your Master's thesis. On top of that, a series of seminars will focus on specific issues related to International Relations. Once you start the thesis process, you will have great freedom to choose what you want to write about. We have many thesis supervisors who have different areas of expertise.

Internship

You have the opportunity to do an internship at an organisation in the Netherlands or abroad. This experience is highly valued within international organisations. Organisations that our students have interned at include:

- Dutch Ministry of Defense
- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies around the world
- Media outlets such as EenVandaag
- Netherlands Permanent Mission to the United Nations
- Netherlands Institute for International Relations 'Clingendael'
- The International Centre for Counterterrorism
- The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies

Please note that you will need to find your own internship and have to follow an internship procedure for approval. Pursuing an internship may have consequences for the date of your graduation.

Extra-curricular

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

Community building

Throughout the year activities, such as seminar series and excursions, are organised by the programme and the study association to encourage community building.

International Relations Seminar Series

Eight times a year the programme offers general [MA International Relations seminars](#) in which for example politicians, professionals from NGO's or officials from other national level or international organisations will share their experiences and discuss aspects of current affairs.

European Union Seminar Series

The [EU seminar series](#) is jointly organised by the master's programme in International Relations and the Institute for History and the Europa Institute at the Leiden Law School. It is primarily aimed at the students who take our MA in European Union Studies. Throughout four sessions per semester, the students have the opportunity to engage with non-academic experts in their field of interest.

CHIRRS seminars and events

The Leiden University History and International Relations departments have set up the [Contemporary History and International Relations Research Seminar \(CHIRRS\)](#). This seminar series offers regular Research Seminars, a Current Events in Perspective series and workshops related to contemporary history and international relations.

EUS Study Trip

The European Union Studies track of MA International Relations organizes a yearly [study trip to Brussels](#). Students have a chance to learn more about the EU institutions, meet lobbyists and interest group representatives working around those institutions, speak to the members of national representations in Brussels, experience Brussels nightlife and network with our alumni who already work there.

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.

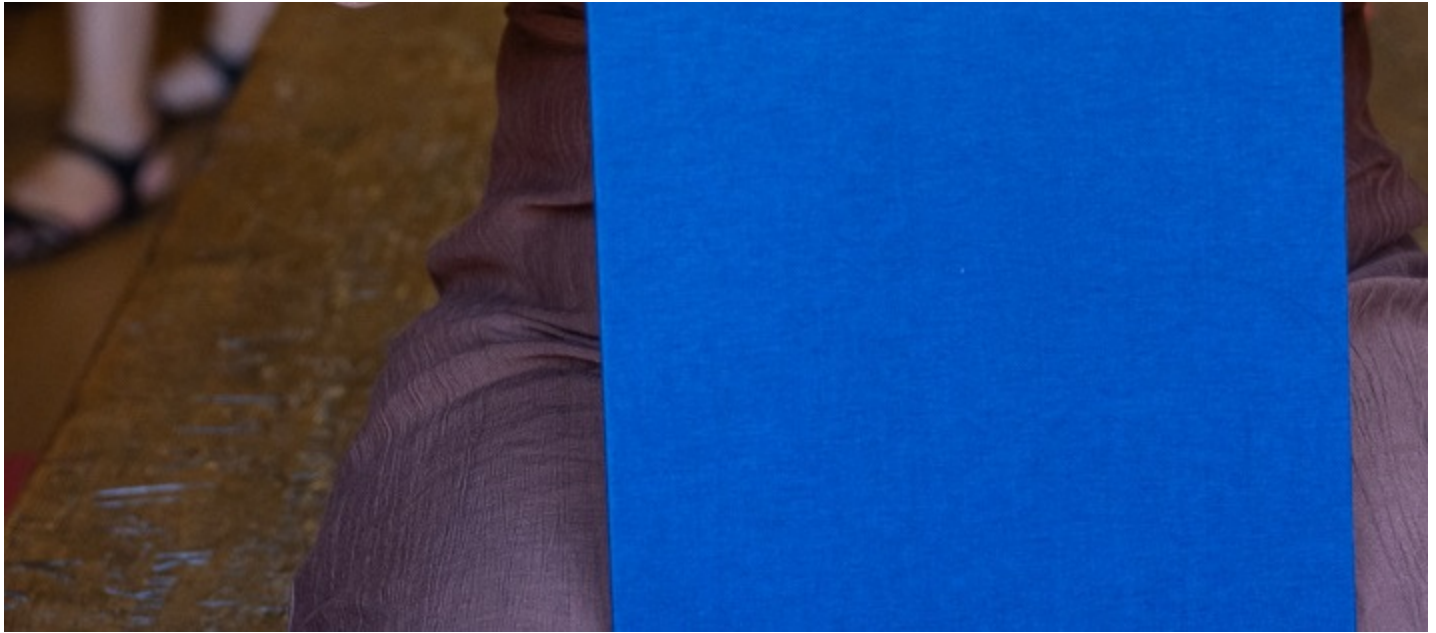
Career prospects

Where do our graduates work?

Because of the extensive curriculum and specialisations, the career opportunities after completing the Master's programme in International Relations are broad. Our graduates have landed jobs in various sectors of the job market, such as research institutes, international organisations, government bodies, NGOs and academia. Examples of the diverse roles of our graduates include:

- Policy advisor at a ministry of foreign affairs;
- Communications manager and project assistant at an NGO promoting reconciliation and peace;
- Consular spokesperson at a ministry of foreign affairs;
- Consultant at an NGO;
- Project manager at a company specialising in geo-services, international development and project management;
- PhD candidate and research assistant;
- Communications officer at an international student federation.





Alumna works at Deloitte Nederland

MA International Relations alumna Vivian Ng now works as a Forensic and Financial Crime Consultant at Deloitte Nederland: "I have the advantage of understanding political dynamics very well." [Read more.](#)

Kent Moore

Graduated in International Relations



"Being from my own cultural background, from the U.S., I came to Leiden with a certain view on the world. Through studying International Relations I acquired much more cultural sensitivity about certain issues. I learned about the impression the U.S. leaves on the world, which opened up my world to different viewpoints."

Recruiting students for our study abroad programmes

"I currently work at CISabroad, a studying abroad organization that has affiliations with over 200 U.S. universities. For the most part I recruit students for our study abroad programmes, but I also arrange the logistics of some of the student trips abroad."

Inspirational lecturers

"As a lecturer I found Lindsay Black very inspirational. He is a very smart man and I owe him a drink or two for being so helpful during the process of writing my thesis."

Jacob Cloo

Graduated in MA European Union Studies



“After graduating European Union Studies I started with a graduate-traineeship in Brussels with the Benelux Union. European Union Studies is a really good start if you want to work in Brussels. Everyone here is expected to have a high level of EU knowledge, something that you will be taught in Leiden.”

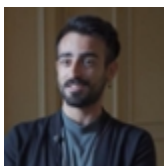
My training in EU law at Leiden was very helpful “My first job was doing research on the implications of two pieces of EU-legislation on cross border healthcare in Europe, and specifically within the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. My training in EU law at Leiden was actually very helpful because I knew instantly where to look for information, official documents and probably even more important, how to read all these documents without getting lost. “

Advising on risks and opportunities that arise from EU-decisions “After that I got a job with Harwood Levitt Consulting, a Brussels based public affairs and political risk strategy consultancy. Here I work for and with clients in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sector, advising them on risks and opportunities that arise from EU-decisions, as well as their messaging and other communications with EU-institutions, trade associations etc. “

A high level of EU knowledge “It helped me to have knowledge on EU law and EU institutions, because I deal with this in my work every day. All the other courses are perhaps less relevant for my current job, but especially important if you get in touch with others in Brussels and talk about what’s going on, you need to have a broad knowledge of what is happening. That is why networking, reading the news papers and getting the latest rumours is a must in the Brussels bubble.”

Miguel Chambel

Graduated in MA European Union Studies



"The European Union Studies track is a great way to not only develop your knowledge, but also to learn how to analyse, reflect and debate on a variety of issues. I tried to be engaged in as many things as possible. I volunteered with human rights organizations like Amnesty

International, I was a research assistant, and I took courses from other master programmes. I think all of those things showed that I am invested and interested, which helped when I applied for jobs."

Contributing to change on important issues "I work in the European Parliament as the secretary-general of the LGBTI Intergroup, which is a cross-party group that promotes LGBTI issues. I applied for this job, because I wanted to advance important issues and to contribute to bigger projects than just my own career. A project that I feel proud of is a resolution, that was mostly drafted by myself and that called on legal action against Hungary for their anti-LGBTI law. It was proposed as the main text of the parliament and adopted a few weeks later by a broad majority. I look back on that as a moment of pride for myself, because things were coming full circle."

International environment "I look back on my studies with fond memories. Since you meet so many people from various countries, you are exposed to different realities. This still helps me today, because I'm working in an international environment."

In which sector do students find jobs?

The graphs below are based on alumni data from the MA International Relations 2016-2020.

- 36 % Government and semi-government organisations
- 13 % Non-profit
- 11 % Consultancy
- 8 % Education
- 7 % Financial institutions
- 5 % Media and journalism
- 4 % Communication and marketing
- 3 % IT
- 3 % Business services
- 2 % Information management
- 8 % Other

Career preparation

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

The Master's programme in International Relations at Leiden University equips you with a range of transferable skills and knowledge that will help you stand out in your future career. Your specialised knowledge is complemented by a broad and contextual understanding as well as critical-thinking skills that can be applied to complex conceptual problems. Other skills you may encounter in the various International Relations courses are:

- Collaboration
- Persuasion

- Research
- Self-directed learning
- Creative thinking

You have the opportunity to do an internship at an organisation in the Netherlands or abroad. This experience is highly valued within international organisations. Organisations that our students have interned at include:

- Dutch Ministry of Defense
- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies around the world
- Media outlets such as EenVandaag
- Netherlands Permanent Mission to the United Nations
- Netherlands Institute for International Relations 'Clingendael'
- The International Centre for Counterterrorism
- The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies

Please note that you will need to find your own internship and have to follow an internship procedure for approval. Pursuing an internship may have consequences for the date of your graduation.

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 [Humanities Career Service](#) provide 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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Student-Alumni Networking Events

One of the many ways the MA International Relations prepares you for your future career is the Student-Alumni Career Networking Event. Practical advice, a panel discussion, and an informal networking reception are key ingredients for this successful event. [Read more](#) about the Student-Alumni Networking Event in 2023 or watch the video for an impression of the Networking event in 2022!

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Admission and Application

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

- [Culture and Politics](#)
- [European Union Studies](#)
- [Global Conflict in the Modern Era](#)
- [Global Order in Historical Perspective](#)
- [Global Political Economy](#)

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.

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.

The study association related to International Relations is [Leiden ISSA](#).

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](#).

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](#).

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

The next [Master's Open Day](#) will take place on 16 February 2024. You can also still watch the recordings of all the presentations from the last Online Open Days. The videos can be found on the [Master Talks page](#).

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 Master's Online Open Days of 5-6 October 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

Ms. Janneke Walstra

Phone: +31 (0)71 527 42 02

Email: stucomair@hum.leidenuniv.nl

***Please note:** The coordinator of studies cannot give any information about students' chances of being admitted to the programme. The Board of Admissions will base their decision on your application as a whole.*

Ask a student

Do you have a question about studying at Leiden University or student life in Leiden? Do you want more information about the International Relations master's programme?

Student ambassador

Jane Holland

E-mail: j.m.holland@hum.leidenuniv.nl

[Chat with](#) Jane for answers to your questions!

***Please note:** Unfortunately we cannot answer detailed questions about admissibility because this depends on the assessment of your previous education.*

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