university of groningen / faculty of arts

Academic year 2025-2026

Assessment Plan

Master North American Studies

1 / Vision of teaching and assessment

The assessment policy of the programme is built on the UG policy on assessment8 and follows from its research-oriented vision in which a learning environment focused on activating students is key. The programme's assessment policy is also directly linked to its intended learning outcomes (in particular the programme's focus on interdisciplinarity, critical and cultural theory, internationality, and inter-Americanness). The emphasis lies on what students should know, understand and be able to do in order to have the best possible preparation for a research career as well as for entering the labour market. Students are thus endowed with a balanced combination of domain-specific and generic competences at Master's level.

The various modes of assessment are considered tools that stimulate and guide our students' learning process while at the same time also helping instructors verify whether students have reached the intended learning outcomes. To ensure the quality of the programme and the students' progress within it, assessment is both formative and summative, and as such has two functions:

1. To provide feedback to students about their performance, which also helps establish whether there are lacunae in the programme and/or individual course modules (formative; during the course unit).
2. To assess whether the learning outcomes of the degree programme, and its individual course units, have been achieved (summative; at the end of the course).

The programme's assessment system is designed in such a way that the forms of assessment suit the programme's intended learning outcomes in the various phases of the degree. The assessment plan enables us to monitor that all intended learning outcomes are covered in the courses.

Assessment takes a variety of forms across the different seminars, from research essays that develop students' ability as independent investigators to in-class group discussions, presentations, and class participation. All course syllabi contain details about the modes of assessment, the criteria of evaluation, the relative weight of the various components of the aggregate grade, and the deadlines for written assignments. In keeping with the programme's educational vision of providing a research-intensive learning environment, all forms of assessment ask students to conduct independent research and to engage critically with their findings. Given that the acquisition of advanced-level English language skills is an important learning outcome of the programme, in-class participation is part of the assessment for many course modules, and the production of research essays is important throughout the entire programme. All course syllabi are made available to students on Brightspace before the start of classes.

In each course module, the programme uses grading guidelines with clearly specified criteria for each assignment. These guidelines, which are either incorporated into the course syllabus or posted separately on Brightspace, guarantee a consistent and transparent assessment throughout course units. The Master's dissertation and the Internship are assessed on the basis of specific lists of criteria that are outlined in the Master's Dissertation Guidelines and the Master's Internship Guidelines, respectively (see Appendix 4). All Master's dissertations are graded independently by two examiners. Prior to embarking on an internship, students, together with their academic internship supervisor (a member of the academic staff) as well as their workplace supervisor, define the specific and generic learning outcomes of the internship.

At the end of their internship, students write a final report in which they describe their actual work experience. The report is assessed by the student's academic supervisor in consultation with the workplace supervisor to ensure that the learning outcomes have been met.

Individualized feedback is given to students on all modes of assessment, either in written format (on essays), or orally (for presentations) to facilitate their active learning process. Written assessment reports by first and second readers are available for all Master's dissertations.

The degree programme is based on a set of interrelated components that cumulatively enable students to achieve the programme's intended learning outcomes. At the end of their degree programme, students will have acquired sophisticated levels of knowledge and understanding of theories of cultural analysis; in-depth domain specific specialized knowledge and understanding of the society, culture, and politics of the U.S. and its relations to the wider hemispheric context; and advanced-level writing, speaking, presentation and argumentation competences in English. The limited statutory length of the programme (2 semesters) means that the progressive dimension of the programme is particularly to be found in the trajectory from the 40 ECTS of specialist course work to the Master's Dissertation (20 ECTS); or, where applicable, from the 30 ECTS of specialist course work to the student's graduate course work in the Americas, and then on to the Master's Dissertation.

At the end of the second semester, the degree programme culminates in a capstone project, the Master's Dissertation. It is assessed on the basis of a clearly defined list of criteria that are outlined in the Master's Dissertation Guidelines (see Appendix 4). In the first semester, students workshop dissertation topics, proposals, and research techniques in the Histories and Methods of American Studies seminar. At the beginning of the dissertation process, students submit a dissertation proposal that asks them to draw up a preliminary project sketch, formulate tentative arguments and/or research questions, and conduct research in order to be able to situate and contextualize their project. On the basis of this proposal, students are assigned a supervisor whose research interests most closely match the proposed topic. Students then draw up a provisional schedule together with their supervisor for submitting individual chapter drafts and the final version. The supervisor meets regularly with the student throughout the entire dissertation writing process and gives extensive chapter- by-chapter feedback. After the final version has been submitted, each dissertation is graded independently by two academic staff members to ensure consistency and transparency. Students receive a copy of the Master's Dissertation Report on their work.

2 /	How to follow the assessment cycle (from design to evaluation and optimization)
	The programme complies with the faculty's guidelines for the design and evaluation of tests, which are shown schematically in the figure below.

3 / Assessment dossier

a. The assessment dossier

The requirements of the assessment dossier are set out in §4 of the 'Protocol for Quality Assurance in the Assessment of Course Units' drawn up by the Board of Examiners.
When requested, the examiner of the programme provides the Board of Examiners with an 'assessment dossier' containing the following:

a) the syllabus
b) the list of marks, comprising all marks that count towards the final mark
c) - for assessments in the narrower sense of the word (i.e. tests): the test that was set, incl. model answers/key
   - for written assignments: the formulation of the assignment, information about the assessment method (assessment criteria and standards) if this is not listed in the syllabus, and a selection of completed assessment forms
d) the assessment blueprint, minutes of peer-support meetings, evaluations and self-evaluations of course units, etc., if available.

b. Parties involved

In 'Rules and responsibilities for the assessment of the Faculty of Arts', laid down by the Faculty Board of Arts on 28 May 2019 (modified on 13-02-2020), all parties involved in fulfilling duties related to the assessment are described.

With regard to the assessment dossier, the following guidelines and responsibilities are relevant.

If a course is part of the periodic evaluation of Board of Examiners, the lecturer (or course coordinator) is requested to provide the information for the assessment dossier (upload on the Brightspace site of the course). If, as a result of the evaluation, shortcomings are found in the basic quality of the assessment, the Board of Examiners will draw up a recommendation to the Cluster Board. The Cluster Board is responsible for drawing up an improvement plan with concrete measures to improve the identified shortcomings. The Board of Examiners will automatically include the course in question in its next assessment round.

4 / Assessment timetable

Overview of learning outcomes of the degree program + matrix	Appendix 1
Schematic overview of time periods intended for assessment, modes of assessment used	Appendix 2
Overview of the intended learning outcomes of the course units and their modes of assessment	Appendix 3
Additional regulations for the graduation dossier (BA thesis evaluation forms)	Appendix 4

The objectives of the degree programme, set out in the learning outcomes of the degree programme (Appendix 1), form the guiding principles. All course units together fulfil a role in working towards these learning outcomes. This is reflected in a coherent curriculum with a transparent structure. The matrix of learning outcomes (Appendix 1) defines the course units that include summative assessments. The "X" indicates that the learning outcome is fully realized in this course.

In parallel with the curriculum, the assessment programme (Appendix 2) offers an overview of modes of assessment and exam periods. In order to gain insight at the programme level into whether the chosen modes of assessment tie in with the learning outcomes of the course units and create a balanced mix in the run-up to the programme- level learning outcomes of the degree programme, the intended learning outcomes of the course units are related to their modes of assessment (Appendix 3).

Specific rules may apply to certain components of the graduation dossier (e.g. for the thesis: approval of the thesis proposal, amount of supervision, resit). These rules are set out in Appendix 4.

5 / Safeguarding of assessment quality by the Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners is responsible for safeguarding the quality of assessment at both the degree programme level and the level of individual course units.

a. Safeguarding of assessment quality at degree programme level

The Board of Examiners annually issues advice on each degree programme's draft assessment plan for the coming academic year.

b. Safeguarding of assessment quality at course unit level

The Board of Examiners has a procedure for the assessments of al course units in a degree programmebearing in mind the position of the course unit in the curriculum and in a specific learning pathway. In addition, a substantiated selection of theses is evaluated.

6 / Archiving

Archiving of course material including assessments is carried out in accordance with faculty policy.

7 / List of documents relevant to assessment

Faculty vision of teaching and assessment – see https://myuniversity.rug.nl/infonet/medewerkers/let/onderwijs/vision-for-education.
Rules and Regulations – the internal regulations of the Board of Examiners.
Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER = OER; *Onderwijs- en examenregeling*) – a legally binding document that applies to the entire cohort of students who start a degree programme in a certain academic year. The TER may also contain transitional arrangements for previous cohorts.
Matrix of learning outcomes – an appendix to the Assessment Plan that specifies the course units with *summative* assessment leading up to or at the level specified in the programme-level learning outcomes and the course units with formative assessment. Placement manual – a manual for the placement course unit.
Syllabus – a document that sets out the details of the TER and the Assessment Plan at course unit level in accordance with the information in Ocasys.
Assessment programme – the implementation of the TER, Part A, Article 4.16

university of groningen / faculty of arts

Appendix 1. Overview of learning outcomes of the degree program + matrix

Dublin Descriptors for MA Level	*Learning Outcomes for the MA Degree Programme in North American Studies articulated in Key Competences* A Master's Degree Programme in North American Studies is awarded to students who demonstrate:
Acquiring Knowledge and Understanding Graduates have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances what is typically associated with the Bachelor's level and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context.	1a. in-depth interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding of specific developments in cultures, politics, and media of the American continents, and their relevance in a global context. 1b. an understanding of the history of the field of American Studies both in the United States and Europe, and of how different conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches relevant to that field can be synthesized into interdisciplinary frameworks for understanding American culture.
Applying Knowledge and Understanding Graduates have the ability to apply their knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new and unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; they are also able to integrate their knowledge and process complex materials.	2a. the ability to independently apply one or more theories and methodologies of the core disciplines of American Studies to the analysis of specific sociopolitical and/or cultural problems in the Americas, past or present. 2b. the ability to work constructively with others to accomplish specific goals. 2c. the ability to plan and complete appropriate coursework in the form of argument-driven research essays 2d. the ability to organize and carry out a substantial research project (i.e. a 15,000-word dissertation) within an established time frame. 2e. advanced awareness of and commitment to scholarly standards in terms of accuracy, ethical behavior, and the breadth of sources used and cited in assignments and in the final dissertation.

Making Informed Judgments and Choices Graduates have the ability to formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information that includes reflecting on the social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements.	3a. the ability to formulate and refine a significant research problem, as well as to gather, select, and critically evaluate relevant information from a wide variety of print, archival, and electronic resources. 3b. the ability to integrate relevant insights from a range of disciplines to critically examine, and articulate possible solutions to, contemporary sociopolitical challenges facing multicultural societies. 3c. the ability to form well-grounded opinions, and engage in informed debate about U.S. politics, culture, and media, taking into account the historical and global dimensions of those problems.
Communicating Knowledge and Understanding Graduates have the ability to communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously.	4a. the ability to communicate effectively and convincingly the results of one's research, and to present complex/abstract information, to both academic and non-specialist audiences, in both writing and oral presentations. 4b. the ability to work and communicate effectively in an international and intercultural context, in-person and using digital technologies. 4c. proficiency in the target language of English at C2 level (near native) in the areas of listening and reading, in written and spoken production (based on the CEFR).

Capacities to Continue Learning: Students have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.	5a. domain-specific and general knowledge, understanding and skills to study autonomously and to formulate an original research problem, in academic (third cycle degree programs requiring MA-level domain specific knowledge) or workplace contexts. 5b. the ability to demonstrate up-to-date knowledge of current developments in the United States and/or in the field of American Studies, and to fill specific knowledge gaps. 5c. the requisite intercultural awareness and skills to successfully work in an international employment and/or academic context.

university of groningen / faculty of arts

Matrix of expected learning outcomes

	1a.	1b.	2a.	2b.	2c.	2d.	2e.	3a.	3b.	3c.	4a.	4b.	4c.	5a.	5b.	5c.
YEAR 1 semester 1																
MA Seminar I	X				X			X							X	
MA Seminar II	X				X			X							X	
Histories and Methods of American Studies		X		X			X				X					
YEAR 1 semester 2																
MA Seminar III: Writing for the Real World									X		X	X				X
MA Dissertation			X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Internship				X					X			X				X
Study Abroad	X								X			X	X			X

university of groningen / faculty of arts

Appendix 2: Schematic overview of time periods intended for assessment

YEAR 1 semester 1						Block 1		Resits	Block 2		Resits
Module	**Code**	**ECTS**	**M/O**	**Teaching method**	**Hours p/w**	**Language of Instruction** week 1-6	week 7assessment	week 21	week 9-14	week t15 assessment	week tbd21
								resits block 1			resits block 2
						Modes of assessment					
MA Seminar I	LAX039M10	10	M	Seminar	3	English Formative assignments (20 %)	Paper (20%)		Formative assignments (20%)	Paper (40%)	Paper(s)
MA Seminar II	LAX082M10	10	M	Seminar	3	English Formative assignments (20%)	Paper (20%)		Formative Assignments (20%)	Paper (40%)	Paper(s)
Histories and Methods of American Studies	LAX077M10	10	M	Seminar	3	English Assignment 1 (10 %)	Paper 30%		Assignment 2 (10 %)	Paper (50 %)	Paper(s)
Total ECTS tested		30									

YEAR 1 semester 2						Block 3		Resits	Block 4		Resits
Module		**ECTS**	**v/k**	**Teaching method**	**Hours p/w**	**Language of Instruction**	week 1-6	week 7 assessment	week 19	week 9-15	week 16 assessment	week 19
									resits block 3			resits block 4
							Modes of assessment					
MA Seminar III : Writing for the Real World	LAX041M10	10	M	Seminar	3	English	Short Assignments (20%) Participation (10%)	Portfolio 20%	Portfolio	Short Assignments (20%) Participation (10%)	Portfolio 20%	Portfolio
MA Dissertation	LAX999M20	20	M	Individual tutoring	n.a.	English					MA Dissertation (100%)	MA Dissertation
Internship	LAX000M10	10	O	Individual tutoring	n.a.	English					Internship report (100%)	
Study Abroad		30	O	Seminars	8- 10	Varies						
Total ECTS tested		30	O									

university of groningen / faculty of arts

Appendix 3: Overview of the intended learning outcomes of the course units

Year 1, semester 1			
Code	**Course unit**	**Intended learning outcomes**	**Mode of assessment**
LAX041M10	MA Seminar I	Variable	Variable
LAX043M10	MA Seminar II	Variable	Variable
LAX077M10	Histories and Methods of American Studies	Students will earn a passing grade in this course if they can demonstrate: 1. an understanding of the history of the field of American Studies both in the United States and Europe, and of how different conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches relevant to that field can be synthesized into interdisciplinary frameworks for understanding American culture. 2. the ability to work constructively with others to accomplish specific goals 3. advanced awareness of and commitment to scholarly standards in terms of accuracy, ethical behavior, and the breadth of sources used and cited in assignments and in the final dissertation. 4. the ability to communicate effectively and convincingly the results of one's research, and to present complex/abstract information, to both academic and non-specialist audiences, in both writing and oral presentations.	group work, presentation, midterm essay, final essay

Year 1, semester 2			
Code	**Course unit**	**Intended learning outcomes**	**Mode of assessment**
LAX047M10	Research Seminar III : Writing for the Real World	Upon successful completion of the course unit, students are able to: 1. Articulate the value of your education and research to a broad audience 2. Apply your knowledge and research to current affairs locally, nationally, and/or globally 3. Constructively contribute to scholarly and non-scholarly discussions 4. Write well-argued essays and give well developed presentations for broad audiences that reflect interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches	class participation, essay, weekly assignments
LAX999M20	Master's Thesis American Studies	At the end of the dissertation-writing process, students will be able to: 1. Conduct independent research on an American Studies topic 2. Produce an extended essay at an appropriate level, abiding by scholarly conventions and standards 3. Draw on theoretical frameworks appropriate to American Studies 4. Demonstrate a thorough and detailed understanding of the complexities inherent in a specific aspect of American culture in its respective historical, socio-political, or other relevant contexts	thesis
LAX000M10	Internship	See placement syllabus (students develop their own learning outcomes)	Internship report
	Study Abroad		

university of groningen / faculty of arts

Appendix 4: Additional regulations for the graduation dossier

Assessment procedure (see also MA thesis manual):

Step 1

At the beginning of the dissertation trajectory, students write a 5-page proposal with a preliminary bibliography. Based on the proposed topics, the first supervisor is appointed based on expertise, availability, and, if possible, student preference. The MA thesis coordinator appoints a second reader, based on expertise and availability, taking care that combinations vary. All lecturers receive the overview.

Step 2

After completion of the final version of the dissertation by the student, supervisor and reader assess the dissertation separately and fill out the advisor/reader report.

Step 3

Consultation of supervisor and reader over the dissertation assessment. After consultation over the final grade, they fill out and sign the Cover Sheet, indicating their agreement on the assessment.

Step 4

The printed and signed version of the form, with both reports attached to the cover sheet, is archived by the Secretariat.

The student receives a copy of the form.

In case that the supervisor and second reader cannot agree on a final grade, they present the case to the EC and hand in this form & the dissertation. The EC asks a third opinion.

university of groningen / faculty of arts

Thesis Assessment Form Master North American Studies

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the dissertation-writing process, students will be able to:

a. Conduct independent research on an American Studies topic
b. Produce an extended essay at an appropriate level, abiding by scholarly conventions and standards
c. Draw on theoretical frameworks appropriate to American Studies
d. Demonstrate a thorough and detailed understanding of the complexities inherent in a specific aspect of American culture in its respective historical, socio-political, or other relevant contexts

Grading Guidelines

In determining the grade, assess the level, quality, and effectiveness of the student's **critical thinking skills** (selection, use, and assessment of primary and secondary sources), **research skills** (knowledge and application of methodology, theories and/or scholarship in the field and proper documentation of sources), and **writing skills** (focused thesis/statement of problem or issue, support of thesis/statement through argumentation, analysis, interpretation; correct grammar, spelling, and formal presentation).

9-10
- original, creative argument
- sophisticated use of research methods/theories
- independent use of secondary material
- extremely high level of technical accuracy

8
- insightful argument
- familiarity with and competent use of research methods
- productive use of secondary material (i.e. enhances the quality of the analysis and advances the essay's argument)
- high level of technical accuracy

7
- convincing argument
- competent use of appropriate research methods
- accurate use of secondary material
- competent level of technical accuracy

6
- adequate argument
- sufficient use of appropriate research methods
- adequate use of secondary material
- acceptable level of technical accuracy

Dissertations that do not meet the requirements of a 6 will receive a failing grade.

university of groningen / faculty of arts

M.A. Dissertation COVER SHEET

Dissertations that do not meet the requirements of a 5.5 will receive a failing grade.

Date	
Name of student	
Student number	
Title of thesis	

Name of supervisor	
Name of second reader	

Final result	
Degree program	**MA in North American Studies**

Signature of supervisor	**Signature of second reader**

Explanation of the final mark:

university of groningen / faculty of arts

M.A. Dissertation Advisor/Reader Report

Dissertations that do not meet the requirements of a 5.5 will receive a failing grade.

Date	
Student	
Student number	
Title of dissertation	

Advisor	
Second reader	

(Please bold to indicate whether this is advisor or second reader report)

Degree program	MA in North American Studies

Comments: