

# Liberal Arts & Sciences Programmes alumni survey factsheet 2017

Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt | ROA  
*Research Centre For Education and the Labour Market | ROA*

## Liberal Arts & Sciences Programmes alumni survey factsheet 2017

How do alumni of Liberal Arts & Sciences (LAS) programmes look back on their undergraduate education? What kinds of (extra-curricular) activities did they do next to their studies? Do they feel that they received a good education and did their programme provide them with a valuable network? What kind of graduate programmes did they attend after graduation? And how likely are Liberal Arts & Sciences graduates to find a suitable job after graduation? These and other questions were the subject of a national LAS alumni survey.<sup>1</sup> This survey was carried out by the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) at the end of 2017.

This factsheet presents a range of significant findings. In order to present these effectively, a distinction has been made between alumni who graduated earlier than 2013 (the 2001-2012 cohorts) and alumni who graduated after 2012 (the 2013-2017 cohorts). On average, the former group of respondents graduated slightly more than 8 years ago and the latter group of respondents graduated 2 years ago. Furthermore, one should take into account that the number of LAS programmes in the Netherlands has increased from one to eleven programmes since the first cohort of graduates in 2001 (see Appendix A). The group of respondents who graduated before 2013 therefore represents graduates from a smaller number of programmes than the more recent group of respondents. A one-to-one comparison between the two groups presented in this factsheet should therefore be taken with a grain of salt.

### Looking back at the programme

LAS alumni are generally very satisfied with the programme they attended. Almost nine out of ten alumni (86%) would attend the same programme at the same university if they could choose again. Another 4% would choose a Liberal Arts & Sciences programme, but at another university. The remaining 10% would not have chosen a Liberal Arts & Sciences programme or would not have enrolled in any higher education programme at all, if given the choice again.

Figure 1 illustrates graduates' evaluation of specific aspects of their LAS programme.<sup>2</sup> Alumni are most satisfied with the interdisciplinary nature, the academic level, and the

quality of the programme. Each of these aspects is evaluated as "good" by at least 70% of alumni. The coherence of the programme and the balance between specialisation and general education are aspects of the programmes which are also positively evaluated.

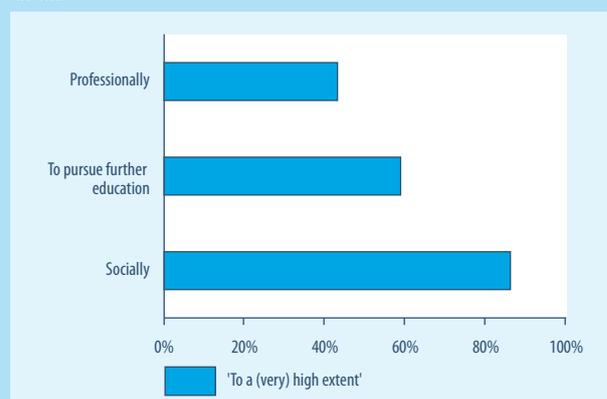
During their studies, the majority of students participated in extracurricular activities. Three out of four alumni volunteered in a (student) organisation. Almost 50% of respondents followed a semester abroad and 40% of alumni indicated that they did an internship. Finally, about one in four alumni had a study-related side job.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1**  
Evaluation of specific aspects of LAS programme



Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (N=2313)

**Figure 2**  
Benefitted from the social network established at LAS to (very) high extent



Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (professionally N=1955; education N=1998; socially N=2082)

Note: Almost three out of four alumni indicated that they established networks during their study period at the LAS programme. Alumni could indicate more than one area of benefit from their network.

1 University College Utrecht, University College Maastricht, Maastricht Science Programme, University College Roosevelt, Amsterdam University College, Leiden University College The Hague, Erasmus University College, University College Groningen, University College Twente, University College Tilburg, Liberal Arts and Sciences at Utrecht University.

2 Measured on a four-point Likert scale from 1= good to 4= insufficient.

About three quarters of LAS alumni (74%) indicated that they were able to establish a valuable network during their undergraduate education. 43% percent of those who

3 However, a side job not related to their studies is more common (66%).

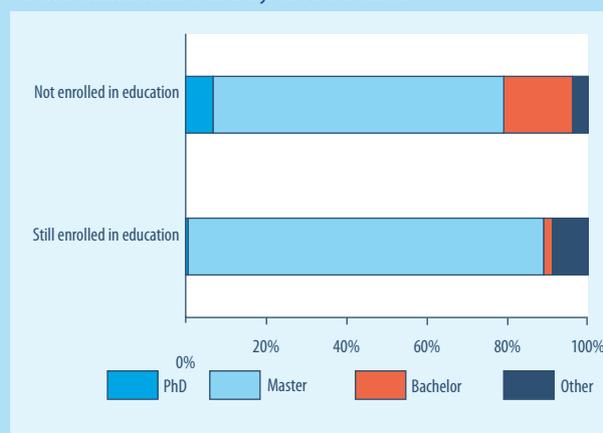
established a useful network stated that they benefitted professionally from this network. For alumni who graduated more than four years ago, this percentage is slightly lower (39%) than for those who graduated up to four years ago (46%). Furthermore, 59% of those alumni indicated that they also made use of their network during their graduate education. This percentage is lower for more recent graduates (52%) than for those who graduated in the earlier cohort (63%). Socially, 86% of alumni reported that they have benefitted from this network. This percentage does not differ between the two groups.

Alumni from LAS programmes are also willing to provide their institutions with a valuable network. More than 90% of graduates are willing to contribute to the programme in some way, for example by informing prospective students about the programme and life after graduation or by organizing a workplace visit to their employers.

### Graduate study

After graduating from their LAS programme, 89% of alumni pursued graduate education. Figure 3 separates these alumni into two groups: those who were still in education when the survey was conducted and those who were not. For both groups, a master's degree is most frequently the (current) highest level of follow-up study programme. Among alumni who are currently not enrolled in education, almost 30% graduated from a master's programme at one of the top 100 universities in the world (as measured by the Times' Higher Education World University Ranking).<sup>4</sup> For those still enrolled in a master's programme, this percentage is almost 20%. For the top 50 and top 25 universities, these percentages are 13% and 9% respectively for those still studying and 24% and 18% respectively for those who already graduated from a master's programme. Moreover, figure 3 shows that about 7% of those who are currently not enrolled in education obtained a PhD title. The group described as 'other education' is relatively large (9%) and mainly consists of LAS alumni currently enrolled in a pre-master's programme.

**Figure 3**  
Further educational tracks by current situation



Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (in education N=723; finished education N=1799)

LAS programmes attract students from all over the world: 40% of the respondents did not live in the Netherlands when they applied for the LAS programme. Almost half of these 'international's students (46%) continued their education in the Netherlands.

**Table 1**  
Top 10 fields of study in further education by graduates from LAS programme

		Percentage of enrolled programmes		
		All	0-4 years since graduation	5 years or more since graduation
1	Law	12	10	13
2	Psychology	10	6	15
3	International Relations	8	7	9
4	Medicine	7	6	9
4	Political Science	7	6	9
6	Life Science	6	7	6
7	Neuroscience	6	6	6
8	Economics	5	4	7
9	Business Economics	5	4	6
10	Environmental Science	4	4	5

Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (N=3421; multiple answers per respondent possible)

This section will explore which academic disciplines LAS graduates study in their further education. Table 1 shows the ten most common fields of study that respondents of the survey enrolled in.<sup>6</sup> The most frequently indicated field was law (12% of the given programmes), followed by psychology (10%), international relations (8%), medicine (7%) and political science (7%). The next most frequently chosen

4 Based on the World University Rankings 2016-2017 ([https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2017/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2017/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats)).

5 The group of international students includes students of Dutch nationality who lived abroad when applying for the LAS programme.

6 Respondents could report up to three follow-up study programmes.

fields are life science (6%), neuroscience (6%), economics (5%), business economics (5%) and environmental science (4%). Two findings stand out when comparing the more recent group of alumni with the 'older' group: Firstly, the share per field of study is lower for the more recent group of alumni, indicating that, over the years, alumni of LAS programmes fanned out over more fields of study. Secondly, there has been a sharp drop in the number of graduates who continue their education in the field of psychology.

88% of graduates felt their undergraduate programme successfully prepared them for further education to a (very) high extent. At the same time, 29% of alumni indicated that their LAS programme helped them to a (very) high extent in finding a suitable educational programme.

About 81% of alumni indicated that there were no additional requirements needed to enter their follow-up study programme.<sup>7</sup> Of the graduates who applied for a follow-up study programme, 72% were accepted into their preferred programme. Of those rejected, 35% reported that they were not given a reason for their rejection, while 25% indicated that they had not taken certain courses. Of those rejected by their preferred programme, only 12% decided not to pursue any further education, 83% attended another programme and 5% decided to take the courses required for their preferred follow-up programme.

### Current situation

What are graduates of LAS programmes currently doing? The survey reveals that 27% are still studying. Of those alumni who have entered the labour market<sup>8</sup>, 93% are working and only 7% are unemployed. Only 3% of alumni who graduated 5 years ago or more, are unemployed. Figure 4 shows the type of employment. Two thirds work for an employer, another 4% work as freelancers and 3% own their own company. Less than 1% work via an employment agency. The remaining 25%, classified as 'other', include alumni with a PhD contract (9%) or working during a gap year (2%).<sup>9</sup>

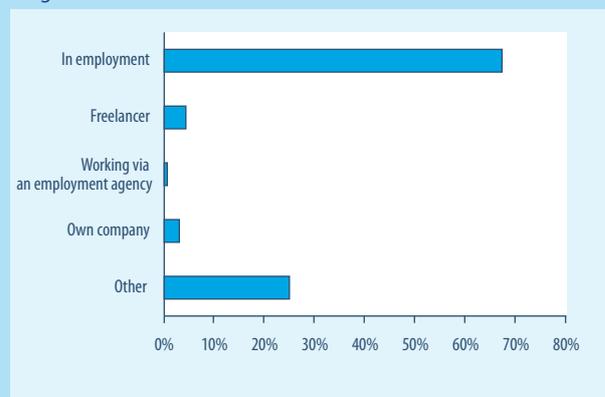
Table 2 shows the top 5 occupations among those employed. The majority of employed alumni (19%) end up in research-related occupations; these are followed by alumni working in advisory occupations (13%). Educational occupations (9%), commercial occupations (8%), and financial or business occupations (8%) conclude the top 5.

7 This indicator only measures the requirements needed for the first of a maximum of three follow-up studies in the survey.

8 Being part of the labour force means currently looking for a job or working for at least 1 hour per week, students excluded.

9 Among the 'older' alumni group, the 'other' category is significantly lower (14%) including 9% of alumni with a PhD contract.

**Figure 4**  
Type of employment of graduates of Liberal Arts & Science Programmes



Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (N=1707)

Note: The figure only includes alumni who are part of the labour force.

**Table 2**

Top 5 fields of work for graduates who are currently employed

	All %	0-4 years since graduation %	5 years or more since graduation %
Research occupation (e.g. researcher, medical laboratory technician, medical analyst)	19	18	20
Advisory occupation (e.g. Human Resources employee, lawyer, legal service provider, staff member)	13	11	14
Educational occupation (e.g. teacher, lecturer, principal)	9	8	10
Commercial occupation (e.g. sales employee, commercial agent, public affairs consultant, marketing specialist)	8	10	7
Financial/business occupation (e.g. bank employee, financial specialist, business consultant)	8	7	9

Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (N=1784)

As stated above, LAS programmes attract students from all over the world. Table 3 gives an overview of the top 5 countries in which graduates are currently working. More than half of graduates work in the Netherlands. Of those, about 18% did not live in the Netherlands when applying for the LAS programme. This implies that nearly one in five international LAS alumni stays in the Netherlands to work after finishing their studies. The other countries in the top 5 suggest that LAS alumni tend to work close to the Netherlands: Germany (10%), the UK (9%) and Belgium (3%). Moreover, about 4% of graduates work in the United States. In many cases, these are respondents that return to their 'home' countries after graduation. About 72% of the 'international' alumni do not work in the Netherlands.

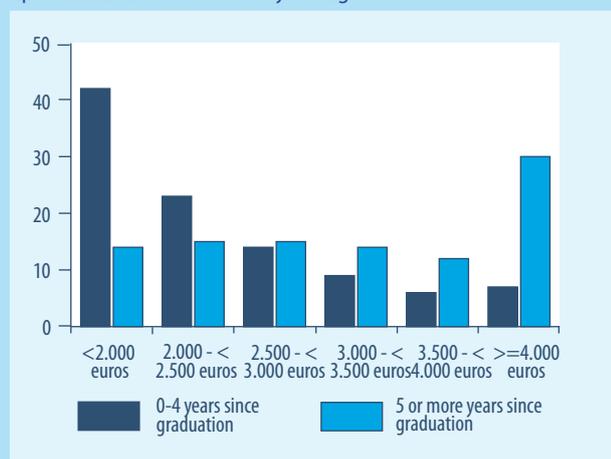
**Table 3**  
Top 5 countries where graduates work

	%
Netherlands	57
Germany	10
United Kingdom	9
United States	4
Belgium	3

Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (N=1741)

Figure 5 shows the gross monthly income of working LAS alumni.<sup>10</sup> This income has been measured in categories.<sup>11</sup> For the sake of clarity, the categories above 4,000 euros a month are grouped together.

**Figure 5**  
Gross monthly incomes of LAS alumni, separately for those graduated up to four and more than five years ago



Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (N=1515)

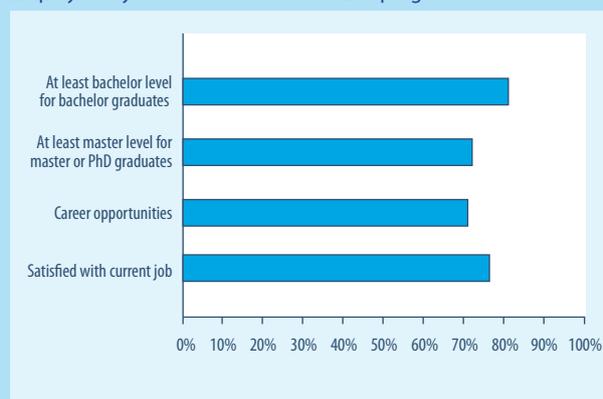
Figure 5 shows that alumni who graduated in the last four years frequently earn less than 2,000 euros per month.<sup>12</sup> For the ‘older’ group of alumni, the proportion of graduates who earn less than 2,000 euros a month is significantly lower; this is generally related to working less than 30 hours a week. Of the more recent alumni, another 23% earn between 2,000 and 2,500 euros gross per month and 14% earn between 2,500 euros and 3,000 euros per month. Of those alumni who graduated at least four years ago or longer, the largest

10 The income is only calculated for respondents belonging to the work force. By doing this, we exclude respondents currently in education with side-jobs.  
 11 The first category of this income variable was <2000 euros. The subsequent categories are 500 euros higher each time, and the last category is >=10000 euros.  
 12 Of those alumni who graduated up to four years ago (at least five years ago) who earn less than 2,000 euros a month, 46% (55%) work less than 30 hours per week.

group earns at least 4,000 euros per month and more than 40% earn at least 3,000 euros per month.

Having a job does not necessarily imply that this job matches one’s individual preferences and qualifications. For that purpose, it is important to consider whether there is a so-called ‘vertical’ match. This describes whether alumni have jobs that require at least their highest obtained degree. Hence, we compared the minimum level that is required for their job with their highest degree obtained. A distinction was made between those who hold a master’s degree or higher and those with a bachelor as highest degree obtained.<sup>13</sup> Among the latter group (see figure 6), 81% have a job at bachelor level. Among alumni with a master’s degree or PhD, 72% have a job that requires at least a master’s degree. The numbers are generally higher for those who graduated more than four years ago compared to those who graduated in the last four years.

**Figure 6**  
Employability indicators of alumni of LAS programmes



Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (master N=1191; bachelor N=282; career opportunities N=1576; satisfaction N=1575)

Next, we consider whether employed alumni see enough opportunities for their professional development and whether they are satisfied with their jobs. Of currently employed alumni, 71% believe that they have (very) many career opportunities. Moreover, 76% of graduates are (very) satisfied with their job. These numbers do not differ substantially between those who graduated more than four years ago and those who graduated more recently.

Finally, we discuss the professional capabilities alumni have and the extent to which they have succeeded in acquiring the competencies LAS programmes seek to instil in their graduates. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale a) the extent to which they possess the skills and competencies LAS programmes have defined as

13 Again, we only include those alumni who are part of the working labour force.

essential learning outcomes for their programmes, b) the extent to which these are required by their employers, and c) the extent to which they think that the LAS programme contributed to the level they have achieved (see table 4). First of all, the findings indicate that a relatively high percentage of alumni possess these capabilities to a (very) high extent. Secondly, a relatively high percentage of alumni indicate that the LAS programme contributed to a (very) high extent to that professional capability. Finally, the results regarding the extent to which these capabilities are required in their current work are more mixed. Four out of five alumni indicate that both 'excellent academic skills' as well as 'intellectual curiosity' are required to a (very) high extent in their current work. On the other hand, just slightly more than half of alumni indicate that 'multidisciplinary breadth combined with depth of knowledge in a chosen concentration' is required to a (very) high extent in their current work. When comparing those alumni who graduated on average 2 years ago and those alumni who graduated on average 8 years ago, alumni in the latter group generally reported a required capability level up by 10 percentage points.

**Table 4**  
Professional capabilities

		Level required for the current job	The level of the respondent	Extent to which LAS contributed to the level
Multidisciplinary breadth of academic knowledge combined with depth of knowledge in a chosen concentration area	%	54	82	81
Ability to approach questions or issues in an interdisciplinary way	%	69	88	87
Excellent academic skills including communication skills, critical thinking skills, research skills and learning skills	%	80	90	88
Attitudes and skills for active participation as citizens in society, including international and intercultural understanding, social skills and a will to contribute to solving social issues	%	66	82	69
Intellectual curiosity, reflexivity, and an open mind	%	79	95	80
N		1592	2394	2368

Source: Alumni Survey LAS (ROA) (N denoted in table)

Note: Percentages display the answers 'to a (very) high extent'. Percentages in the first column are only based on respondents currently working.

## Appendix A: Response

Graduation Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Respondents (N)	20	23	32	35	48	41	81	115	125
Response (%)	19	18	24	17	26	22	21	29	28
Programmes (N)	1	1	1	1	3	3	4	4	4
Graduation Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Respondents (N)	144	205	267	287	309	375	513	420	3040
Response (%)	25	35	33	36	37	40	40	43	33
Programmes (N)	4	5	6	7	8	8	10	11	

Respondents = Number of respondents from a specific graduate cohort.

Response = Response rate of a specific graduate cohort.

Programmes = Number of LAS programmes respondents graduated from.

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