

## RESEARCH CLINIC

### General information

Supervisor:	Esli Verheggen
Title of clinic:	Educating the whole person: mapping connections between learning objectives and personal values in LA&S
Number of students:	2-3
Major ( <i>if applicable and approved by the Major Convener</i> ):	
(Pre)requisites ( <i>if applicable</i> ):	Qualitative Research Methods (preferrable)

### Research context

The perceived value of higher education appears to be in decline. In the Netherlands, last April the Dutch senate approved a new budget for the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, resulting in major budget cuts for Dutch universities and prompting a consortium of universities to file a lawsuit against the government (Universiteiten van Nederland, 2025). As skepticism about the relative value of traditional higher education is rising, an increasing need exists to highlight the ways in which learning outcomes in study programs are valuable – for society as a whole, for future employers, and for students themselves.

The broad, interdisciplinary, small-scale nature of Liberal Arts & Sciences can connect to a wide range of educational goals. In contrast to monodisciplinary, fixed, and subject-specific programs, LA&S degrees provide students with the opportunity to explore a variety of disciplines, while at the same also developing a strong basis in generic, ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills’. Although LA&S programs, particularly in the United States, are sometimes criticized to focus on “learning for learning’s sake”, thereby not preparing students for a specific career and producing employable graduates (Kingkade, 2013), comparative studies point out that LA&S students do at least as well as their monodisciplinary peers in the postgraduate labour market (Kovačević et al., 2024). Even more, in the longer run, the generic skills that LA&S students develop may provide them with an advantage in a constantly changing labour market where adaptation has become the norm (Kovačević et al., 2024; van der Wende, 2011).

But what exactly may those generic skills be? And how and for whom are they relevant?

In this clinic, we will identify what students’ own perceptions are about how learning objectives in varying LA&S courses connect to their personal values. Values refer to desirable goals that guide actions over a longer period of time and in various contexts (Schwartz, 2012). Identifying the different ways in which learning objectives connects to personal values will help highlight the different ways in which LA&S education is personally valuable and will help structure reflection on how these learning objectives connect to career preparation and societal engagement.

This research clinic is appropriate for students who want to gain hands-on experience with thematic analysis as qualitative research method and who are interested understanding varying perspectives on the value of LA&S.

## Students' tasks and activities

*Please specify the tasks and activities, timeline, the learning aims and how they are assessed, i.e. what the deliverables will be.*

### **Workload:**

Approximately 6-8 hours per week

### **Learning outcomes:**

- Understand different perspectives on the value of LA&S education
- Become familiar with Schwartz' framework of basic individual values and Goal Systems Theory
- Gain first-hand experience with thematic analysis as a qualitative research method using AtlasTI software

### **Tasks and activities:**

February – weekly meetings à 1.5 hours

- Selected readings on the development and value of LA&S, curricular orientations, goal systems theory, and Schwartz' theory of basic values;
- Introduction to and familiarization with the research data
- Set up of Atlas.TI

March – weekly coding meetings à 1.5 hours

- First coding round and review of emerging themes
- First update and refinement of code book
- Calculation of intercoder reliability

April – bi weekly meetings à 2 hours

- Second and third round of coding and review of identified themes
- Calculation of intercoder reliability

May

- Finalizing of code book
- First draft of reflection paper

June

- Final draft of reflection paper
- Presentation of findings to LUC staff

### **Deliverables:**

- An iteratively developed codebook describing different types of learning goals that connect existing learning objectives to personal values
- A 3-4 page group reflection paper on the value of LA&S (2500 words) critically linking the developed codebook to existing literature