



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# International Weapons Law

Course Code	R_IWL
Credits	6
Period	P4
Course Level	500
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Law
Course Coordinator	prof. dr. G.N. Cornelisse
Examiner	prof. dr. G.N. Cornelisse
Teaching Staff	
Teaching method(s)	Seminar

## Course Objective

At the end of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Map an overview of the main principles of international weapons law, and general sources on international weapons law and institutions dealing with weapons, arms control and disarmament (including weapons of mass destruction and killer robots);
2. Explain the different levels at which regulations in this area have been adopted, and how these different levels of action relate to each other, and understand the different ways of international law making in this area
3. Describe the origins of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and the law-making process;
4. Apply the most important legal provisions of the ATT (regarding scope and the obligations on exporting states);
5. Identify and explain weaknesses and gaps in the international legal framework regulating small arms and light weapons;
6. Specify how new technologies in the area pose new legal challenges with regard to existing control instruments;
7. Describe International and EU laws on export control in this area, including those on dual-use goods, and explain the relationship of controls on dual-use goods and the combating of weapons of mass destruction;
8. Identify and reflect on legal challenges posed by autonomous weapons, which select and engage targets without human intervention;
9. Explain the role of civil society in the development of international weapons law.
10. To write a well-structured and well-argued legal analysis on a specific topic related to international arms law.

## Course Content

The international law of weapons existing today comprises a large variety of rules from different levels. Weapons of mass destruction are governed by a comprehensive regime, but in the field of conventional arms, the rules are less extensive and leave more leeway for states. Because of the direct link with national security, regulation in this area is a sensitive issue for states. Existing treaties in this area thus often only govern specific categories of weapons, and they may differ in their scope of regulation – from a complete ban to mere limitations on the manufacture or trade in arms.

After providing an overview on the main principles and general sources on international weapons law and institutions dealing with weapons, arms control and disarmament (including weapons of mass destruction), this course will address the laws governing the manufacture of and trade in conventional arms.

Regulations and controls in this field have been adopted at the national, regional, and international (global) levels. Students will reflect on the ways in which these different levels of action relate to each another. Moreover, the course will cover the variety of actors involved in the development and implementation of arms control measures. Attention will be paid to the Arms Trade Treaty (entered into force on 24 December 2014), regulating the international trade in conventional arms.

Students will also be introduced to new technologies and the challenges they pose for the regulation and control of small arms and light weapons, such as record keeping and tracing. Moreover, the course will cover EU law on export controls, and address the legal framework of export controls on dual-use goods—goods that can be used for both civilian and military purposes. Legal challenges posed by autonomous weapons systems, which select and engage targets without human intervention, will receive separate attention. The role of civil society in shaping international weapons law will also be covered.

### Additional Information Teaching Methods

The course will be delivered through seminars. Students are expected to read the required materials beforehand, prepare assignments before each class, and to actively participate in the discussion.

### Method of Assessment

Take home exam and written assignments

### Literature

Selected readings to be announced on CANVAS.  
Boothby, Weapons and the law of armed conflict, Oxford University Press, 2016  
Recommended reference material: Research Guide to International Weapons Law by Gudrun Zagel, see  
[http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/International\\_Weapons\\_Law1.html](http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/International_Weapons_Law1.html).

### Additional Information Target Audience

Apart from regular students, the course is also available for:  
Students from other universities/faculties  
Contractor (students who pay for one course).

Courses from a master at the faculty can only be taken as a secondary course if you have a diploma that gives access to the relevant master/ specialization and if you are enrolled in a master.

### Explanation Canvas

Consult CANVAS for the course syllabus and other info.

### Recommended background knowledge

Basic knowledge of legal regulation and public international law.