



WHITEPAPER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: THE DUTCH EDUCATION SYSTEM EXPLAINED

DISCOVER THE ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING IN THE NETHERLANDS

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INTRODUCTION

When you have studied and graduated abroad you are more competitive on the labour market. If you are considering to study and live abroad, it's crucial to find out what countries offer quality education — and what country best fits your needs.

One education system that is worth exploring is the Dutch education system, since it ranks among the best education systems in the world. In this whitepaper, we'll be looking into the Dutch education system in detail.

You will learn:

- How the Dutch education system works
- What it's like to study and live in The Netherlands (cultural and practical aspects)
- What requirements international students should meet to study and live in The Netherlands
- What your Dutch degree will be worth in other countries, and vice versa
- What kind of study, funding, housing, and working opportunities The Netherlands has to offer
- What questions you need to ask yourself to determine what country and universities are the best fit for you

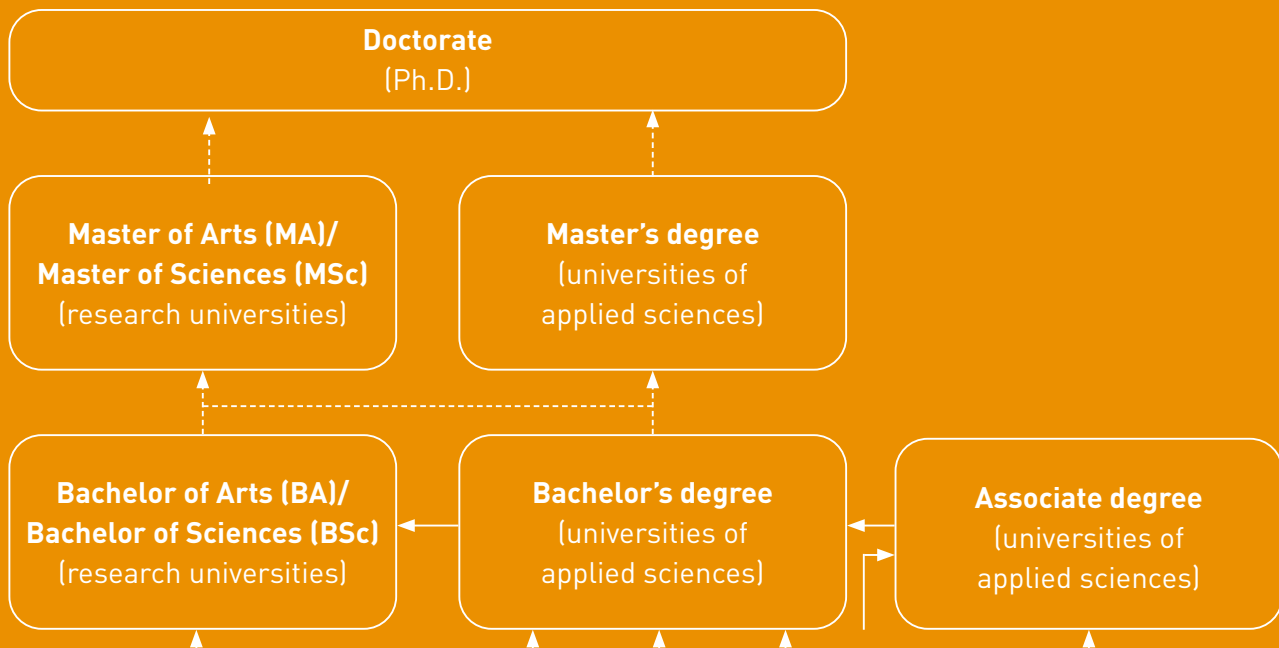


CHAPTER 1: THE DUTCH EDUCATION SYSTEM EXPLAINED

Before we discuss what it's like to study and live in The Netherlands, it's important that you understand the structure of the Dutch education system, so that you can find out which university and type of education is right for you. It's also important to know if you're able to meet the admission requirements, so we'll look into those too.

If you want to study in the Netherlands, the undergraduate and postgraduate studies — and the corresponding types of universities — are important for you. In this chapter, we take a look at the different universities and degrees in the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

You can use the flowchart below to see how the undergraduate and postgraduate levels of the Dutch education system are built up.



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1.1 A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY VS. A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

In the Netherlands, there are two types of universities that you can attend for undergraduate and postgraduate studies: a university of applied sciences and a research university.



A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The education at a research university is theory-based, you will engage in a lot of (scientific) research, and experiments to validate theories. Students are curious, eager to learn, mostly interested in theory, research, essay-writing and more in-depth knowledge.

If you're a person that likes to work independently, perform and do research, an academic study probably suits you well.

A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Studying at a university of applied sciences is practice-based: you develop skill sets that you will apply in your future working environment. Compared to a research university, your studies are more practical in nature. You'll be working on projects directly related to your field, doing internships and gain work experience. At a university of applied sciences, you will work together with other students constantly throughout your study. In essence, studying at a university of applied sciences will prepare you for a professional role in your professional field.



MASTER'S DEGREE AT A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

The second cycle in higher professional education usually lasts 1 year, but in some specialisations (such as music) this is 2 years. This cycle leads to the title of Master of Arts or Master of Science (MA/MSc) or a Master with the addition of the specialisation in which the degree has been obtained, for example Master of Social Work.

During the master's programme, the student specialises further in carrying out a practical assignment for a particular profession. A final paper or graduation project forms part of the programme, with the emphasis on applied research.

MASTER'S DEGREE AT A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

You can get a master's degree from an academic university in 1 to 3 years, **after graduating with a bachelor's degree at a research university**. You can also apply for a master's degree with a related bachelor's degree from a university of applied sciences. In that case, you might be required to follow a pre-master programme to be accepted into a master programme at a research university.

After graduating, you receive the master degree of science or master of arts.

After getting your master's degree, you can choose to pursue your studie to get a Ph.D. or doctorate.





1.2 DEGREES FROM A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Now that you know the difference between the two types of undergraduate and postgraduate universities in the Netherlands, it's time to look into the type of degrees that you can get at these universities.

ASSOCIATE DEGREE

An associate degree is a degree that you can get in 2 years, at a university of applied sciences. After getting your associate degree in a particular field, you can advance to the bachelor level of that study.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE AT A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

You can get a bachelor's degree at a university of applied sciences in 3 or 4 years. Upon graduation, you can either start working or continue with a master's programme. International students that get a bachelor's degree from a university of applied sciences usually advance to a master's programme at a research university abroad or in the Netherlands. Students usually get direct admission to Master's programmes

abroad. In the Netherlands, as a Bachelor graduate from a university of applied sciences, you might be required to do a pre-master when applying to a master of a research university, unless there is an agreement between the universities or you meet specific requirements (minimum gpa or have had research related courses)

MASTER'S DEGREE AT A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

You can obtain a master's degree from a university of applied sciences in 1 or 2 years, after getting your bachelor's degree. A master's degree from a university of applied sciences has the same level of classification as a master's degree from a research, more practical, type of education.





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BACHELOR'S DEGREE AT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

A bachelor programme at a research university is a 3-year programme. Students that get a bachelor's degree from a research university can advance to an academic master's programme directly after graduation.

MASTER'S DEGREE AT A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

A master's programme at a research university lasts one to three years depending on the programme and your pre-education. Bachelor graduates of a university of applied sciences might be required to do a pre-master for example. After graduating, you receive the degree master of science or master of arts. After getting your master's degree, you can choose to get a Ph.D. or doctorate.

DOCTORAL STUDIES - PHD

After your Master at a research university, you can decide to pursue with doctoral research. This Phd programme takes from 2 to 4 years depending on your research.





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1.3 SUMMARY: DEGREES AT A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

To give you an overview of the differences between degrees at a university of applied sciences and at a research university, we made this schematic comparison:

University of applied sciences	Research university
Master's Degree	Master of Science/Art degree
Bachelor's degree	Bachelor of Science/Arts degree
Master's degree can take up to 2 years	Master's degree can take up to 3 years
Bachelor's degree usually takes 4 years, in some cases 3 years	Bachelor's degree takes 3 years
Two semesters of internships are part of the Bachelor programme	Possibility to advance to a Ph. D programme (with a master degree)
More suitable if you are a practical, hands-on person that likes to work on group projects	More suitable if you're an analytic, and a thorough researcher that likes to work on the why's and theories of how.
Employers consider a graduate to be hands-on work-along type of person, with work experience.	Employers consider a graduate to be an analytic type of person



1.4 HOW THE DUTCH EDUCATION LEVEL RANKS COMPARED TO EU RANKINGS

The Dutch national classification framework² (NLQF) describes how the Dutch education levels rank in order. The NLQF helps you find out what skill level belongs to a particular degree. In this table, you will find the classifications as assigned by the Dutch government:

EQF	NLQF	Qualification
8	8	Docotorate (Ph. D)
7	7	Master
6	6	Bachelor
5	5	Associate degree
4	4+	Preuniversity secondary education
4	4	Higher vocational education
3	3	Intermediate vocational education
2	2	Preparatory secondary vocational education level 1
1	1	Preparatory secondary vocational education level 2

1.5 ECTS: EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM

In European higher education, the performance of students is measured by credit points. As a student, you will receive credits for every exam that you will have passed, project or internship that you will have completed. Credit points are awarded through a European grading system, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). ECTS is a European standardized system that aims to make study programmes more transparent and comparable. [You can check the European Commission's Education and Training website to read up on ECTS.](#)

An ECTS credit point represents a certain amount of 'working hours'. **In the Netherlands, one ECTS credit point stands for 28 study hours.**

So if a Dutch course is worth 5 ECTS credit points, that amounts to $5 \times 28 = 140$ study hours.

Note: ECTS credit points vary from country to country, ranging from 20 to 30 study hours.

One year at a Dutch bachelor's degree study equals 60 ECTS credit points. So, when you graduate from a regular 4-year bachelor's degree, you will have earned $4 \times 60 = 240$ ECTS credit points.

Students can transfer their ECTS credits from one university (of applied sciences) to another.



CHAPTER 2: STUDYING AT A UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

From here on out, this whitepaper focuses on studying for a bachelor's degree at a university of applied sciences. We start with the admission requirements.

2.1 ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

If you are an international student that wants to get accepted at a Dutch university of applied sciences, you need to have an admissible diploma. This is the [HZ's list of admissible diplomas](#). Please note this list is not exclusive and might defer from the one to the other institutions.

If your diploma isn't on this list, we will have it checked by the Nuffic, the NA-RIC Dutch organisation. If you don't meet the admission requirements you can take an alternative entrance exam in the Netherlands. The requirement for the alternative entrance exam is that you are at least 21 years old. There may be costs involved in the exam.



2.2 ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to a valid diploma, there are also language requirements that you will need to meet if you want to study at a Dutch university of applied sciences. Since the courses and examinations of your study will be in English, you will need a good command of spoken and written English. Dutch universities of applied sciences use varying testing systems to determine if your level of English is sufficient.

One of the more common testing systems is the [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)](#). This is one of the English tests that HZ accepts. You will require a score of at least 6.0 to be eligible for admission at HZ. Please contact the university to check the required score for the programme of your interest. Language requirements can vary per university and study programme.

For the scores of other accepted language tests at HZ University of Applied Sciences, consult the table below.

IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC and Cambridge English grades & scale					
IELTS	TOEFL Paper	TOEFL Internet	TOEIC2*		Cambridge English grades and scale**
			Listening and Reading	Speaking and Writing	
7.5	625	113	790	400	Advanced (CAE) - Grade B (scale 194-199) Advanced (CAE) - Grade C (scale 191-193)
7.0	600	100	780	350	First (FCE) - Grade A (scale 185 and above) Advanced (CAE) - Grade C (scale 185 and above)
6.5	575	90	720	310	Advanced (CAE) - Grade C (scale 180-184) First (FCE) - Grade A (scale 180-184) First (FCE) - Grade B (scale 176-179)
6.0	550	80	670	290	First (FCE) - Grade B (scale 173-175) First (FCE) - Grade C (scale 169-172)
5.5	525	70	620	260	First (FCE) - Grade C (scale 162-168)





2.3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXEMPTIONS

If you have an 'International Baccalaureate' or a diploma from an international school, you do not have to take the mandatory English test. If you have a 'European Baccalaureate' with English as a first foreign language, you are also exempted from the English language requirement.

- If you are educated in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Ireland, United States, Canada (except Quebec), Malta, Australia or New-Zealand, you do not need to take a mandatory English test.

You are also not required to take a mandatory English test if you have a diploma (including English as an exam subject) listed on [the diploma list](#), provided that your final grade for the English language on your diploma is sufficient.

Please contact the university to check your eligibility for exemptions.

2.4 GRADUATED: WHAT'S NEXT?

After getting your bachelor's degree from a university of applied sciences, there are 4 different next steps you can take. As an indication: 71% of HZ's graduates enters the job market in the the field of their studies within 3 months after graduation. 25% of the students will continue to study for a master's degree.*

After your Bachelor graduation, you can:

- Start working in your field.
- Apply for a master's degree at a university of applied sciences
- Apply for master's degree at a Dutch research university (you might need to follow a pre-master programme)
- Apply for a master's degree at universities abroad

* HBO-monitor 2019



CHAPTER 3: STUDYING AND LIVING IN THE NETHERLANDS

Studying and living in a foreign country comes with certain dynamics and rules. This chapter talks about the (practical) matters that you need to know when you are considering to study and live in the Netherlands.

3.1 STUDY IN THE NETHERLANDS

Let's examine what studying in the Netherlands is like.

INTERACTION IN THE CLASSROOM/ BETWEEN STUDENTS

The Dutch are open-minded, transparent people that use direct communication. This results in dialogue and topical discussions in the classroom. Learning in The Netherlands isn't a one-way street where the lecturer sums up the contents of the lecture; students actively participate. You'll get to work on your analytic, reasoning and communicative skills — which will come in handy when you start working in your field.

There's also a lot of interaction between you and other students since universities of applied sciences in The Netherlands lean heavily toward working in project groups. Collaboration is at the centre of these projects: you will be working closely with your fellow students. This is a simulation of the dynamics of a Dutch working environment.

INTERNSHIPS

Since studying at a university of applied sciences is practice-based, it's relatively easy to find a suitable internship during your study. When you do an internship as part of a university of applied sciences study in your third year, it will be a work-along internship combined with applied research. This internship can be done in the Netherlands, or abroad.

FIRST INTERNSHIP

You gain work experience and become familiar with your professional field.

SECOND INTERNSHIP

Doing research represents 70% of your second internship, completed with about 30% of work-along activities.

ONE SEMESTER AT A PARTNER UNIVERSITY

Most Dutch universities will offer you the opportunity to specialise for one semester at a partner university abroad. HZ University of Applied Sciences has more than 100 partner universities over the world. This international experience adds value to your CV.





**FUNDING,
SCHOLARSHIPS AND
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EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Most universities of applied sciences — and universities throughout the Netherlands in general — recognize the importance of organising or facilitating extracurricular activities for their students. These activities — such as participating in sports club, or student board, or following an Honours Programme — are great for social contact, exploring new possibilities and gaining helpful (working) experiences.

INTRODUCTION WEEK

Universities in the Netherlands organise a mandatory introduction week for all new (international) students. During this week, you will get all the information you need to make a good start with your studies in the Netherlands. You will also meet your classmates and your study career coach, and participate in a lot of fun activities.

3.2 TUITION, FUNDING & SCHOLARSHIPS

TUITION FEES

The tuition fees depend on your nationality. [You will find the tuition fee that applies to you on this page.](#) The tuition fees are annual and only represent the cost for classes. Costs for books, housing, traveling, etc. are not included.

Students who apply as Exchange or Erasmus students in the frame of an exchange agreement between the Dutch University and a partner university abroad, do not have to pay tuition fees.



FUNDING

To finance your study, you may be eligible for a student loan, student funding or postgraduate funding in the Netherlands. To determine if you qualify for financial support to fund your study in the Netherlands, [you can check DUO's financial aid.](#)

An advantage of studying in The Netherlands is that you can do it at relatively low cost,

SCHOLARSHIPS

While common in other countries, scholarships — especially full scholarships — are rare in the Dutch education system. This is due to the relatively low tuition fees. There is, however, a scholarship option for incoming students that you can look into:

HOLLAND SCHOLARSHIP FOR INCOMING STUDENTS (NON-EU students only)

The Holland Scholarship is financed by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science and Dutch research universities and universities of applied sciences. The Holland Scholarship is not a full scholarship and has a value of €5000.

At HZ the scholarship is awarded for one year only, [under the conditions that you will find on this page.](#) Conditions vary per university.

3.3 PRACTICAL INFORMATION

HOUSING

Universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands typically partner with

housing companies to provide accommodation for their students. The living accommodations that the housing partners provide are almost always closely located to the university. Universities are within cycling distance or easily reachable via public transportation.

After registering with your university of choice, it is recommended to book a room in time to acquire an accommodation that best meets your wishes.

INSURANCE

If you are staying in the Netherlands, you must have insurance for medical expenses. As an international student, you will need to take out a health insurance and a third-party liability insurance. Also, make sure you have a travel insurance.

EU-STUDENTS AND INSURANCE

As an EU-student, you are not required to take out a Dutch public healthcare insurance if you're already insured in your home country. Your insurance company can provide you with the European Health Insurance Card.

Before you leave, we would advise you to check with your insurance company whether everything is covered for your study abroad. **Note that as soon as you have a part-time job next to your studies, or if you do a paid internship, you need a Dutch public healthcare insurance.**



NON-EU STUDENTS AND INSURANCE

As a non-EU student, you have to take out an insurance policy in the Netherlands.

There are two insurance companies in the Netherlands specialised in insurances for foreign students:

- AON
- IPS

VISA FOR NON-EU STUDENTS

Whether or not you will need a visa to study in the Netherlands depends on your nationality.

If you hold the nationality of one of the following countries, you do not need a visa: Switzerland, USA, Canada, Australia, New-Zealand, South-Korea, or Japan. If you're from another non-European country, **you do need** a visa to study in the Netherlands.

Most universities in the Netherlands will apply for the Visa documents on your behalf, after you have completed the application process. Students receive a residence permit for the entire period of their studies, with a maximum of five years.

REGISTRATION WITH TOWN HALL

All international students staying in the Netherlands for a period longer than four months have to register with the municipal register of the Dutch town or city where they are living. Representatives of the town hall will help you with the registration during the introduction week.

BANK ACCOUNT

If you are not from a country within the Single Euro Payment Area (SEPA), you need to apply for a student bank account. If you are from a [SEPA country](#), you can use your current bank account(s) in the Netherlands. If you are staying in the Netherlands longer than one year, you also may need to apply for a student bank account. Please note: a minimum age of 18 is required to open a bank account in the Netherlands.

TEMPORARY JOBS

There are a lot of temporary jobs options for international students in The Netherlands. [The Dutch have a very high English speaking proficiency](#), so not speaking the Dutch language will not hinder you from finding a side job. Especially in the bigger cities, stores take on foreigners as employees regularly. Non EU students would need a work permit.



CHAPTER 4: WHAT IS THE BEST FIT FOR YOU? CHECKLISTS


When choosing the university and the country that's best for you, there are several decision factors to take into consideration. To find out what factors are particularly important to you, it's helpful to ask yourself a set of questions.

There are a lot of questions that you could ask yourself, such as:

4.1 FUNDING, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND ACCOMMODATION POSSIBILITIES

- What funding possibilities does this country have?
- Does the university offer an excellent programme? Can you find a good job after graduation?
- What additional funding possibilities does this university provide?
- What will my tuition fees be in this country and university? Can I afford it?
- What accommodation possibilities does this university provide?





SPEAK WITH AN
HZ STUDY
ADVISOR
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4.2 INTERNSHIPS, SEMESTERS ABROAD, AND WORKING

- What universities (of applied sciences) does the university partner with?
- Does this university partner with universities abroad?
- Does this university have connections with companies in my preferred field?
- Will these connections provide me with internships opportunities (abroad)? And with working opportunities after graduating?
- Can I do a semester abroad?
- Can I easily do a master's programme at another university after graduating from this university?
- What country do I prefer to work in after graduating? Will this country have sufficient employment opportunities for graduates from my field?
- If not, is this country the best choice for me? If I explicitly want to work in that specific country, is this study the right choice for me?

CHAPTER 5: ABOUT HZ UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Now that you have an idea about what studying and living in the Netherlands is like — and what questions you need to ask yourself to find out if it suits you — it's time to find the right place to study. In this last chapter, you can read about [HZ University of Applied Sciences](#) in Vlissingen and Middelburg, located in the South-West of the Netherlands.

As a university of applied sciences, we focus on practice-based education. Our close cooperation with the business world, various applied research centres, and our global network of partner universities is of great importance.

HZ has around 4,800 students divided over four study years and 26 bachelor degree programmes, eight of which are taught in English. It's a small university with a personal approach. Some 500 students come from outside the Netherlands: HZ has a great mix of Dutch and international students.

If you would like to learn more about studying at the HZ as an international student, [you can speak with one of HZ's study advisors](#) (click on study advisors):

[You can also speak with one of HZ's student ambassadors](#) to discuss the student life in Vlissingen and Middelburg.

HZ has ranked in the top three Dutch multidisciplinary universities of applied sciences for ten years in a row! [Read more about our rankings.](#)

GOVERNMENT-FUNDED

HZ is a government-funded University of Applied Sciences (HBO). To obtain government funding in the Netherlands, universities must meet a number of quality requirements. The quality of the departments and programmes is regularly evaluated by acknowledged VBI's (Visiting Assessment Organisations) of the [Ministry of Education, Culture and Science](#).

ACCREDITATION

The Bachelor programmes taught at HZ — [including the various English-language programmes](#) — are accredited by [The Netherlands-Flemish Accreditation Organisation \(NVAO\)](#), based on international agreements.

HZ STANDS OUT FOR ITS

- High ranking;
- Personal approach;
- Outstanding student services (housing, facilities and counselling)

