

feature

# Study opportunities in the Netherlands

A low cost of living and tertiary education programmes in English are two of the Netherlands' selling points.

On a worldwide scale, the Netherlands doesn't figure very highly on the list of favourite study destinations for many students. According to Nuffic, an organisation supporting the internationalisation of higher education in the Netherlands, a total of 42,035 international students were studying in the Netherlands during the 2003/2004 academic year, making up eight per cent of the total student population.

Although this is not a huge figure when compared to the 565,039 students who were studying at US universities in 2004/2005 for example, international enrolments at Dutch higher education have been increasing – up by 12 per cent in 2003/2004 compared with 2002/2003 – and many institutions are taking a more proactive approach to marketing.

"Erasmus University Rotterdam has developed a special website for international students," says Marija Zeravica Rehak, International Student Recruiter at the university. "In addition we participate in numerous education fairs across the world. Another way to reach our potential students is by cooperation with the Netherlands Education Support Offices in China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and in the near future, in Mexico, Brazil, India, Russia and Vietnam."

Anya Luscombe from Roosevelt Academy in Middelburg also uses a

[have] started to be English taught programmes – business studies, business economics, econometrics, accountancy – this will probably change in the near future," she adds.

While most universities may offer certain courses in English, some use English language for all communication purposes. "Roosevelt Academy is an English-speaking international university college, so students don't have to be able to speak Dutch to study here," relates Luscombe. "Although many Dutch mainstream universities now offer individual degree programmes in English, it's only at the university colleges where everything is in English."

Apart from the advantages of language medium, Dutch higher education institutions have much more to offer international students, according to Zeravica Rehak. "Dutch universities do not have overcrowded international classrooms and maintain a fairly balanced student population," she asserts. "Students can enjoy a continental yet internationally-oriented European atmosphere in Holland, which is also perfect for travel opportunities. Of course, the most important aspect of Dutch higher education is the reasonably priced, high quality education."

With most undergraduate degree courses lasting three to four years, the

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variety of recruitment efforts to reach new international students, including the Internet, personal contacts overseas and print advertising. She adds that they encourage students to attend an exchange programme at their university in order to get a taste of what the Netherlands has to offer. Crucially, she notes, "there is a lack of student awareness about the opportunity to study in English for a high quality honours degree" there.

Although not an English speaking destination, one of the major selling points for international students about the Netherlands is the fact that an increasing number of university and college courses are taught in English there. Currently, over 1,000 courses are taught in the English language at Dutch universities, encompassing a wide range of subjects and qualification levels, and this list is continually being added to.

Diana Hense, from the University of Amsterdam, says that they first started offering a masters degree in economics in the English language, which has proved to be the most popular course with international students. "Since more of our masters

low tuition and living costs offered in the Netherlands are a central consideration for international students choosing to study there. The country's location in the heart of Europe also means that it is easy to get to and from most countries, while non-EU students can apply for a work permit to work for up to 10 hours a week year round or alternatively, full-time during the months of June, July and August. "The Netherlands is a very international country, small but busy in the middle of Europe," says Hense. "The Dutch are used to visitors from different countries/cultures and almost everybody speaks English."

Nuffic reports that the most significant nationalities currently studying in Dutch higher education institutions are German, Belgian, Chinese, Moroccan and Indonesian and the university of Rotterdam is currently host to 140 different student nationalities, according to Zeravica Rehak. "The larger student bodies are a result of historical links – Indonesia; geographical vicinity – Germany; good institutional partner relations – Italy; and economic relations and sister-city relations; China," she says.

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