

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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## focus

## Courses in Canada

Short-term courses are becoming more diverse in Canadian high schools as they cater for the needs of a wider range of overseas students. **BETHAN NORRIS** reports.

Overseas students have long been looking to Canadian high schools to provide them with an international study experience and according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 25 per cent of all student visa holders – needed for stays of three months or over – were studying in a secondary school in 2004. The secondary sector, therefore, is an important one for the Canadian international education industry and schools are increasingly diversifying their product range to cater for students not able to commit to study periods of a year or more.

The types of courses on offer vary in terms of their academic and language content and in some cases appear to resemble general language and activity courses, more traditionally offered in private language schools. Richmond School District in British Columbia offers semester programmes for five months as well as bespoke short-term programmes for groups and Mike Kliman, District Administrator of International programmes, says that these programmes provide a way to introduce the district and the schools to potential long-term students.

He also highlights the difference between these programmes and those offered by language schools. "Many of our programmes now offer some element of integration with the domestic student population so that students have yet another 'touchstone' and legitimate venue for meaningful interaction to make Canadian friends."

Kootenay Lake School District in British Columbia also offers a variety of short-term programmes for international students, ranging from three-week programmes in summer and winter, as well as a three-month spring programme and one- and two-month winter programmes. Sandy Prentice, International Programme Coordinator, believes that attracting international students is "a good thing for our very sheltered Caucasian community". She reiterates, "Short-term programmes give a wonderful snapshot of all the things your schools and communities have to offer and this helps a student decide if they would

like to return to Canada at some point to continue their education."

However, not all schools have found their short-term programmes to be so successful. "We are thinking about eliminating all programmes that are less than a semester in length," relates Scott Bergstrom of Gulf Islands International Programme in Salt Spring Island, BC. "It has been our experience that many of the short-term students lack the commitment to take their studies as seriously as they might."

Very short-term programmes for international students may imply a lack of academic focus that may be at odds with a high school learning environment, but, often, overseas students have a very definite academic purpose. Clemens Rettich from Cowichan Valley School District in British Columbia says that their five-month credit programme is more popular with students than their three-month courses that don't offer academic credit. "The five month programme... strikes the perfect balance between a longer term full-immersion in English, a full complement of academic and other courses and a shorter time away from home," he asserts. "Many of our students who come for one semester opt to stay for a second semester once they are here."

Rettich adds that these types of courses are particularly popular with Brazilians who can transfer the credits gained in Canada to their own school system. But he notes, "The vast majority of our one-semester students are from Germany. As Canadian courses are not fully transferable to the German system, time spent away from school in Germany comes at a cost. Therefore, a one-semester [programme] is easier to deal with."

High schools in Canada have the potential to tap into a wide range of student markets by providing a serious array of programmes for international students. As Jacques Pelletier from Collège Bourget in Rigaud, Quebec, says, "[Short-term high school programmes] attract students who want to learn a language fast."

## subject focus

## Australia-style prep

High school study overseas can be a daunting experience, but the preparation programmes offered in Australia aim to make the process as painless as possible.

Many high schools in Australia now offer high school preparation courses to international students as a natural addition to the international programmes provided within the mainstream school. For some schools, such as All Saints Anglican School in Merrimac, QLD, preparation programmes were introduced in response to rising international enrolments in mainstream classes.

"I feel that entering mainstream high school classes without high school preparation and a suitable English language proficiency is basically a waste of time," states Michael Bartlett at the school. "It is exhausting for students and often bad for their self-esteem. It also greatly reduces their chances to perform well and achieve results that will allow them to enter good universities."

While all high school students benefit from a strong orientation programme that focuses on both academic language skills as well as the cultural differences that may crop up when studying overseas, Deborah Hansen from St Paul's School in Bald Hills, QLD, points out that for some students, a full-time preparation programme before starting mainstream schooling may not be necessary. This school therefore provides two kinds of programmes: "There are some students who have sufficient English language ability to commence mainstream classes whilst they receive an ongoing orientation regarding teaching styles and cultural expectations," she explains.

For students studying on a preparation programme directly attached to a high school, full-time studies within the school is often the intended goal and successful completion of the course usually guarantees entry. Studying on an on-campus preparation programme can also provide a gentle introduction to the local social scene. "Students on [our preparation] courses have the distinct advantage of studying on the same campus as mainstream students and integrating into the school through shared social spaces, classroom visits, sporting and arts events and buddy programmes," says Karen Lindner at Eltham College in Eltham, VIC.

However, other organisations, such as Nudgee International College in Virginia, QLD, provide placement courses for students who can go on to a range of high schools in the state. The college has links with seven high schools in Queensland and offers a Study Abroad Program for 12 months whereby students study English at the college and then receive direct entry into one of these high schools. "The majority of our students are from Asian countries with an increase in Chinese students [in recent years]," says Micheale Craymer at the college. "We do have European students, mainly from Germany and Switzerland."

According to schools, the largest nationalities undertaking high school preparation courses are Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Thai and Chinese, although they also attract nationalities from a wide range of other countries.

Location	Name of school	Min. age of high school prep. students	Min. length of course in weeks	Entry requirements		
				English test	Academic reports interview Exam	Automatic entry to school?
Adelaide, SA	English College of Adelaide	13	-	✓	✓	✓
Adelaide, SA	SA Adelaide Language Centre	12	5	✓	✓	✓
Bald Hills, QLD	St Paul's School	12	1	✓	✓	✓
Boondall, QLD	Nudgee International College	n	10	✓	✓	✓
Brisbane, QLD	Hilton International College	16	10	✓	✓	✓
Brisbane, QLD	Shafston International College	12	12			
Collaroy, NSW	The Pittwater House Schools	12	20	✓	✓	✓
Daisy Hill, QLD	John Paul International College	-	20	✓	✓	✓
Eltham, VIC	Eltham College of Education	11	10	✓	✓	✓
Gold Coast, QLD	Mackintosh International College	16	4	✓	✓	
Hoppers Crossing, VIC	Westbourne and Williamstown Grammar Sch.	12	10	✓	✓	✓
Ivanhoe, VIC	Ivanhoe Grammar School	12	10	✓	✓	✓
Melbourne, QLD	Melbourne Language Centre	13	4	✓	✓	✓
Merrimac, QLD	All Saints Anglican School	13	10	✓	✓	✓
Murdoch, WA	Murdoch Language Institute	12	10	✓	✓	✓
Noosa, QLD	GV Noosa	13	2	✓	✓	✓
Sydney, NSW	Specialty Language Centre	13	12	✓	✓	✓
Sydney, NSW	Tyndale Intensive Language Centre	13	10	✓	✓	✓
various, NSW and VIC	Australian College of English	12	v	✓	✓	✓

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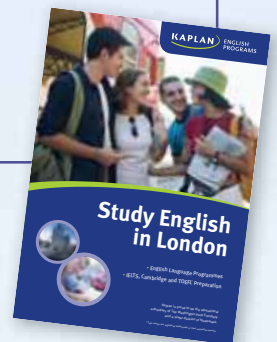
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