

## Universities in Europe: Some Good Reasons to Go Dutch

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As the long August holiday winds down, the beach gear and sunscreen are reassigned to their customary corners of the closet, and many students turn their thoughts towards academic concerns. Both prepared pupils and late bloomers may be pleased to know that it's not too late to consider an optimal educational opportunity here in Europe: university in the Netherlands.

- **Why should many students, especially Europeans, consider earning a bachelor's or master's degree in the Netherlands?**

The short answer to this question, expressed in Italian, is simply: "il buon rapporto qualità-prezzo," or excellent value for the money. Research universities in the Netherlands regularly appear in the Top 100 of world rankings in many disciplines, including the popular field of business. Dutch academic life and student services are comparable to Anglo-Saxon university models, with key factors such as active learning, access to professors, ample career services, study abroad, a highly international student body, and disability services.

Favorably for EU students in 2017-18, the average tuition for most Dutch bachelor's degrees and numerous master's courses is approximately € 2,000/year, with tuition fee loans available. Annual tuition fees for international students start from a relatively affordable €6,000 for undergraduates and from €8,000 for international graduate students. To boot, the monthly living expenses in many university towns hover at a reasonable €900-1,000, and students of all citizenships may work in Holland during their studies. The well-organized Dutch government even offers a student travel pass for discounted/free travel on national trains and need-based, supplementary grants for housing expenses ([www.duo.nl/particulier/international-student/](http://www.duo.nl/particulier/international-student/)).

Students who have lived in Italy may also discover certain shared values between Italian and Dutch cultures, a significant one being the importance of the work-life balance. Many university towns in the Netherlands are considered "a misura d'uomo" (people friendly), incorporate beautiful architecture, and offer beneficial community services and cultural events such as open-air markets, music or food festivals, and environmentally advanced sustainability measures, including numerous bicycle paths throughout the city centers and beyond.

- **In Holland, what are the different types of higher education institutions?**

Dutch universities are divided into three categories: 1) research universities, including technical universities; 2) University Colleges within research universities; and 3) universities of applied sciences. At the most academically rigorous level, 14 research (and 3 technical) universities in the Netherlands offer over 100 bachelor's courses and over 1,000 master's degrees, all taught in English. In traditional European fashion, the three-year Bachelor generally focuses on a single subject area and may require a thesis or capstone project.

Multiple-subject undergraduate programs also exist. Thus, if a student wishes to study further afield with a Liberal Arts approach, there are 9 University Colleges—that is, institutional divisions of select research universities—that emphasize small-scale learning environments with self-selected, multi- or interdisciplinary curricula, often comprising on-campus residence halls. Tuition fees at these University Colleges are relatively higher, however still less than €4,300 for EU nationals and from €8K-12K for international citizens in 2017-18.

For those students who comprehend most effectively through hands-on learning with integrated, practical applications, the Netherlands boasts 39 universities of applied sciences. In these four-year bachelor's degrees, students may pursue exciting areas from sports management to fashion design to game engineering to social work. To search for a range of study areas at all three types of Dutch institutions, the website [www.studyinholland.nl](http://www.studyinholland.nl) provides a wealth of information, including a search tool for program offerings ([www.studyfinder.nl](http://www.studyfinder.nl)).

- **Generally speaking, what do I need to apply for a Dutch bachelor's program taught in English?**

The Dutch have, in the opinion of many educators, a highly democratic system of higher education that is immediately accessible to a majority of European high school graduates. Approximately 90% of Dutch bachelor's degrees utilize "General Admissions," for which the entry requirements are largely attainable, meaning for example: a passing mark on the International Baccalaureate Diploma; a 60% on the Italian *Diploma di Esame di Stato* from *liceo* (*classico, scientifico, or linguistico*); or a European high school diploma that's judged as equivalent to the most advanced, Dutch high school diploma, abbreviated the "VWO." Only in certain "General Admissions" cases will particular subjects or scores be required, and applications may be made through the national application system ([www.studielink.nl](http://www.studielink.nl)) as late as the summer preceding university enrollment.

In this way, initial access to Dutch university generally poses minimal requirements, however in order to progress, students are required to prove themselves formally during their first year of university study. This accessible structure encourages students of all abilities—including those who have struggled academically in high school, or who need a few more months to mature—to apply to Dutch bachelor's degrees with confidence.

For those students who have always excelled, the Netherlands offers highly competitive, university admissions processes that are, by nature, more selective due to rigorous curricula: namely, that of the University College programs in Liberal Arts; degrees in art, music and dance performance that are offered by conservatories or art academies; small-scale, intensive honors programs in selected disciplines at individual universities; and *Numerus Fixus* programs for the study of medicine, physiotherapy and dentistry. Such selective programs may require applications and supporting materials relatively earlier, up to 6-8 months before university enrollment.

For these reasons and more, the Netherlands offers university degrees that should be intriguing to discerning European and international citizens. Savvy students and families are strongly encouraged to include Dutch institutions on the famous college list!

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