



# Overview

Quality Assurance System  
in Higher Education

## The Netherlands

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# Overview of the Quality Assurance System in Higher Education: The Netherlands

## Introduction

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The National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) works closely with overseas partners to increase internationally the value of Japanese quality assurance in higher education through close cooperation with foreign quality assurance organizations as well as our core activities of university evaluation, awarding of degrees, and research.

For developing international collaborative activities among quality assurance bodies, it is increasingly necessary to distribute the information on quality assurance in Japanese higher education and to understand the background information and institutional system of the partner country. This will be the key factor in realizing effective cooperation with the other countries. Thus, NIAD-UE is working actively for a mechanism to share information towards the enhancement of 'mutual understanding'.

In the context, NIAD-UE developed the 'Information Package' as a means for publishing basic information on Japanese higher education and its quality assurance system. On the other hand, NIAD-UE is taking a systematic approach to collect information of higher education and quality assurance systems in other countries. Presently, NIAD-UE has produced an 'Overview of the Quality Assurance System in Higher Education: The Netherlands' in both English and Japanese.

Dutch higher education has been earning a worldwide reputation for its high quality. This is achieved through a national system of regulation and quality assurance such as review activities by the higher education institutions themselves and accreditation by an external accreditation agency. The Netherlands also has broad experience in the field of international promotion, collaboration and its quality assurance. So far a variety of quality related activities such as quality assessment/evaluation, mutual recognition of qualifications and disseminating QA information have been undertaken at EU regional, national, and quality assurance organizational levels to promote various forms of inter-institutional cooperation and institutional student mobility. This 'Overview' document is based on public information concerning Dutch higher education system, quality assurance system in the European Higher Education Area.

I would like to express my special thanks to the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) and the Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education (Nuffic), which have signed Memoranda of Understandings with NIAD-UE, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Tokyo, for their great contributions to the production of this document. I would also like to thank the people who gave us useful comments and suggestions to produce the document.

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Shin-ichi Hirano, D.Eng.  
President of NIAD-UE



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## I. Basic information on the country

Name of country	Kingdom of the Netherlands		
Capital city	Amsterdam		
Seat of government	The Hague		
National language	Dutch		
Population*	16,530,000 (2009)		
Nominal GDP*	79,670,000,000 USD (2009)		
Nominal GDP per capita*	48,209 USD (2008)		
Public spending on education as a percentage of the total government spending**	All levels of education	12.0% (OECD average 13.3%)	HE level 3.3% (OECD average 3.1%) (2006)
Public spending on education as a percentage of GDP**	All levels of education	5.5% (OECD average 5.3%)	HE level 1.5% (OECD average 1.3%) (2006)
Spending per student at higher education level**	15,196 USD (2006)		
Public spending on higher education per student***	10,773 USD (2005)		
Tertiary education entry rates ****	60 % (2007)		
Organisation of education system	Please refer to II-3. Dutch education system, page 10.		
Language of instruction*****	<p>As many bachelor's programmes are taught in Dutch, sufficient knowledge of the Dutch language is required before students can start the programmes. In addition to Dutch, students also need to be proficient in English, as much professional literature is in English and a number of courses are entirely taught in English.</p> <p>In master's programmes, a growing number of courses nowadays are offered in the English language. For complete listings of higher education courses in English, visit <a href="http://www.studyinholland.nl/">http://www.studyinholland.nl/</a>.</p>		
Cycle of academic year*****	In higher education, the academic year begins on 1 <sup>st</sup> September and ends on 31 <sup>st</sup> August of the following year.		

### Source:

- \* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan: Overview of Kingdom of the Netherlands: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/>
- \*\* Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2010): International Comparative Education: Statistics 2010-2011.
- \*\*\* Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2009): International Comparative Education: Statistics 2009-2010.
- \*\*\*\* OECD (2010): Education: Key tables from OECD. <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/oecd/content/table/20755120-table2;jsessionid=2hmowk2t6qd1h.delta>
- \*\*\*\*\* Leiden University website: <http://www.leidenuniv.nl/en/studyinleiden/>
- \*\*\*\*\* European Commission: Eurybase – Organisation of the Education System in the Netherlands 2008/09. [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/NL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/NL_EN.pdf)

## II. The higher education system

### 1. Introduction

#### 1-1) A binary system

The Netherlands has two main types of higher education. Research universities which are also called WO institutions (*WO-Wetenschappelijk onderwijs* in Dutch) focus on the independent practice of research-oriented work in an academic professional setting. They essentially train students in academic study and research, although many study programmes also have a professional component. Universities of applied sciences which are also called HBO institutions (*HBO-Hoger Beroepsonderwijs* in Dutch) are more practically oriented, preparing students directly for specific careers. Their study programmes focus on the practical application of knowledge (please refer to diagram of Dutch education system, page 10).

Overall there are 14 publicly-funded research universities, 42 publicly funded universities of applied sciences and various privately funded universities, institutions of higher professional education as well as several institutes for international education.

#### 1-2) The Three tiers

In 1999, the European Union ministers of education signed the Bologna declaration. The Bologna process was set up with a view to harmonising national education systems in the member states and facilitating student and staff mobility. The aim of the Bologna process was to establish a single European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010, with structural uniformity, transparency and quality assurance as key objectives. One of the ways to establish Europe-wide standardisation within the higher education system resides in the three-tier bachelor's, master's and PhD academic award system.

The Netherlands is a front-runner as far as the Bologna process is concerned. The Dutch research universities began introducing the three-cycle structure (bachelor, master and doctorate) already in 2002, and all study programmes have by now been organised accordingly.

The average university bachelor's programme leading to a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree takes three years and provides a broad but predominantly in-depth basis for further specialisation. University Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Science (MSc) degree courses take one to two years to complete, depending on the respective discipline.

PhD degree courses leading to the title of doctor are only available from research universities and entail four years of full-time research under the supervision of an academic. The research emanating from the conventional doctorate degree must be original, accompanied by an extensive dissertation and publicly defended.

#### 1-3) University governing structure

The governing structure of the Dutch research universities is laid down in the Higher Education and



Research Act (WHW) of 1993. The internal governance reform of 1997 brought about changes in governance at all levels of internal governance. One of the tendencies in university governance in the Netherlands is an increase in institutional autonomy. The Dutch research universities enjoy a large degree of institutional autonomy from the state. Within universities, departments (faculties) also possess a certain extent of independence from the central governing bodies.

Each research university is governed by an executive board. The three members of the board are appointed by a board of trustees which in turn is appointed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (in the case of Wageningen University, by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality). For historical reasons, the process of appointment of the executive board differs at Radboud University Nijmegen, Tilburg University and Free University Amsterdam.

All universities consist of a number of departments. These are headed by deans and have their own executive boards and (faculty) councils.

#### 1-4) University funding

In university funding, three flows of funding are distinguished, defined by their origin. The first flow concerns direct government funding, the second consists of research project funding awarded by Dutch research councils NWO (The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) and KNAW (The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences), and the third is money coming from third parties, both public and private (such as companies, the EU etc.).

The first flow, government funding, is a lump sum payment by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (in the case of Wageningen University and Research Centre by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality). The universities are free to decide how to spend that money. The first flow is divided into a part for teaching and a part for research. The part for teaching is based on the number of diplomas which a university awards per year. The VSNU (the Association of Universities in the Netherlands) which represents the interests of the 14 research universities in the Netherlands in the field of research, education, is currently negotiating with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to base the teaching part of funding not only on the number of diplomas, but also on enrolment. The research part of the first flow constitutes the largest part of research funding - about 60% of all research funding - and its only structural basis.

Money coming in via the second and third flows - together accounting for 40% of university funding for research, the second flow being about half the size of the third - consists of temporary funds.

Moreover, tuition fees form a small source of teaching-related income of the universities. It is a matter of debate whether tuition fees belong to the first or third flow of funding.

The VSNU estimates that the budget of the Dutch research universities amounts to about 5.7 billion Euros in 2010. The first flow accounts for 1.7 billion Euros for research and 1.6 billion Euros for teaching and learning. Student fees amount to 0.4 billion Euros, funding by NWO to 0.3 billion Euros and other sources, including private funding, to 1.7 billion Euros.

## **2. History and legislation**

### **2-1) Research university sector**

The history of the Dutch research university sector dates back to 1575, when the University of Leiden was founded as a reward for its citizens' persistence in fighting the Spaniards during the eighty-year war with Spain. The establishment of other universities followed in subsequent years, e.g., in Groningen (1614) and Utrecht (1636). Over the centuries additional universities were founded, partly as an explicit economic government policy to further activity in some disadvantaged regions, for example, the University of Twente in 1961 and Maastricht University in 1976. Some institutes of higher education were founded by church people, such as the protestant Free University in Amsterdam or the Roman Catholic Radboud University in Nijmegen. They take part in the national accreditation system and are funded by the government. At present, the research university sector consists of 14 institutions.

Until the 1970s, the university sector was left more or less on its own by the government. It appeared to function according to its own purposes and little policy attention was directed towards them. However, this changed rather dramatically and quickly. At the end of the 1970s the circumstances for higher education were not very bright. The main problems concerning the university sector were the student drop out rate being rather high and the average length of study being rather long compared to the situation in other countries. In addition, many of the academic staff appointed during the sharp rise in student numbers lacked the qualities and motivation needed to cope with the challenges of the coming decade, while institutional management was in general rather powerless, weak and not very professional. As a consequence the universities were inefficiently run. Major restructuring was believed to be necessary to make higher education more efficient and more effective. The most important reform and retrenchment operations designed and implemented from the end of the 1970s were a restructuring of university education through the introduction of the so-called two tier structure in which research university education is structured in a first tier of four years, awarded with a bachelor's degree and a post-graduate second tier leading to a master's degree, two retrenchment operations for the research university sector resulting in the closure of several departments and a reshuffling in terms of programmes offered, and the introduction of a system of conditional funding of research. These ad hoc restructuring operations lasted until the mid-1980s when a new approach regarding the steering and functioning of the Dutch higher education system was introduced.

### **2-2) The development of the HBO-sector**

The sector of the university of applied sciences (the HBO-sector), also can be traced back quite some time, but developed under very different circumstances. Most of the older institutions have their roots in the 19th Century and evolved out of the guilds. The first legal framework was provided by the 1919 Domestic Science and Technical Education Act differentiating, among others, primary, secondary domestic, and technical education. In 1968 higher vocational education was introduced as a separate type of education with the passing by Parliament of the Secondary Education Act (SEA) that codified all forms of education between primary and university education. One of the

characteristics of the SEA and the way in which the Ministry of Education and Science used it, was a detailed regulation of institutional affairs, thus severely restricting the further development of the HBO-sector. A sector that, among other things, was extremely diverse and fragmented in those days.

The period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s can be characterised as one of substantial growth and systemic development. Student numbers rose rapidly in higher education creating the beginning of budgetary pressures that were to dominate the 1980s. In line with developments in other countries, the Dutch HBO-sector was considered ideal to take care of this increasing student body, as it (1) was considerably cheaper than the university sector; (2) catered for part-time education; and (3) provided the kind of orientation perceived as beneficial to the growth of the Dutch economy. Expansion of the HBO-sector, however, also gave rise to discussions about both the internal structure of the sector and its relationship with the research university sector.

This resulted in a multitude of white papers with different scenarios. Apart from the interesting rituals, diverging political views, and quite some rhetoric that accompanied these initiatives, the actual results were meagre. The HBO-sector was praised for its values and efforts, but little was done to take it out of the 1968 SEA.

In 1983 the then Minister of Education and Science proposed in the white paper '*Scaleenlargement, Task-reallocation and Concentration*' (STC) a major restructuring of the HBO-sector with far-reaching consequences for the structure and functioning of the Dutch higher education system. The main objectives of the STC restructuring were: (1) a considerable increase of institutional size through institutional mergers; (2) an increase in institutional autonomy regarding the use of resources, personnel policy and the structuring of the educational processes; and (3) an increase in institutional efficiency through economies of scale. The Minister envisaged that as a result of the implementation of the STC-operation, a limited number of multidisciplinary, medium sized institutions with considerable autonomy would arise. The outcomes of the merger processes, however, surpassed all expectations. By July 1987 the original 350 plus institutions had merged into 85 institutions of which some 45 were mostly large to very large, multi-purpose institutions. Some of the latter turned out to be larger than most of the existing universities. Thus, in terms of structure, the Dutch higher education institutional landscape had changed dramatically. In terms of function, increased autonomy was to be attained through the implementation of the new governmental steering philosophy as well as through the framework provided by the new HBO-Act (1986) that finally took HBO out of the realm of secondary education and placed it formally in higher education, thereby formalising the already existing binary structure.

### 2-3) Higher Education and Research Act (WHW)

The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) entered into force on 1 August 1993. The WHW replaced the University Act (WVO), the Higher Professional Education Act (WHBO), the Open University Act (WOU) and numerous other regulations governing higher education and research. The Higher Education and Research Act contains general provisions applicable to the entire higher education sector in the Netherlands. It also includes:

- provisions that apply specifically to research universities, universities of applied sciences and the Open University. These relate to the structure of courses and institutions;
- parameters relating to the organisation of teaching, such as entry requirements with regard to previous education, and study loads;
- regulations concerning examinations, students, participation in decision-making, staff, planning and funding;
- provisions governing cooperation between institutions.

The Act redefined the administrative relationship between the government and the higher education and research institutions. Previous legislation provided to a large extent for *ex ante* regulation and planning, assigning a central role to government.

The new Act has its origins in the 1985 policy document 'Autonomy and Quality in Higher Education' (HOAK-document), which sets out the philosophy of hands-off government and autonomous educational institutions operating in a flexible way. The underlying principle is to give the institutions greater freedom of policy within the parameters laid down by government, not as an end in itself, but as a means of enabling the higher education system to respond more effectively and decisively to the changing needs of society.

The concept of autonomy is one of the basic ideas of the Higher Education and Research Act. Detailed *ex ante* control by the government is replaced by *ex post* control of a more general nature. At the same time the Act stressed that despite decentralisation the government remains responsible for the macro-efficiency of the system. Government is said to apply 'selective control', intervening only when necessary.

The administrative relationship between government and institutions of higher education and research, as defined in the Act, is based on the following principles:

- the government should intervene to prevent undesirable developments only where self-management by the institutions is likely to have unacceptable results;
- government intervention should primarily take the form of remedying imperfections in the system *ex post*;
- the instruments at the government's disposal should be characterised by a minimum of detailed regulation;
- the institutions must lay down norms to ensure legal certainty, reasonableness and proper administration.

The Act accords the institutions considerable freedom of programming. They are responsible in the first instance for maintaining quality, providing an adequate range of teaching and research programmes and ensuring access to education. Quality control is exercised by the institutions themselves, by external experts and, on behalf of the government, by the Inspectorate for Higher Education. In principle, the government assesses on an *ex post* basis only whether funds have been deployed effectively and whether the intended results have been achieved. If major shortcomings are identified, the institutions will be informed accordingly. If discrepancies between ideal and

reality persist, notably in the field of quality, the government has the option, with due regard to the proper procedures, of using coercive powers backed up by sanctions.

The Higher Education and Research Act 1993 was amended in 2002, and at the beginning of 2009 a bill was presented to parliament further amending the Act. The amendments are designed to improve the quality of higher education and the position of students and professionals. Among other things, they will address the legal protection of students, student participation, simpler administrative processes for enrolment and de-registration, a clear separation between governing and supervisory bodies and the role of the examining boards.

*Source:*

*Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) (2007): Higher Education in the Netherlands: Country report.*

*The Europe World of Learning 2010, Volume 2. Routledge, 2009.*

*European Commission: Eurybase - Organisation of the Education System in the Netherlands 2008/09.*

*[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/NL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/NL_EN.pdf)*

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO): Internationalisation of Higher Education: Europe's Vision and the Attitudes of the Netherlands and Flanders (NIAD-UE Seminar presentation material, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*VSNU website: <http://www.vsnunl.nl/Home-english.htm>*

### 3. Dutch education system

#### Research universities

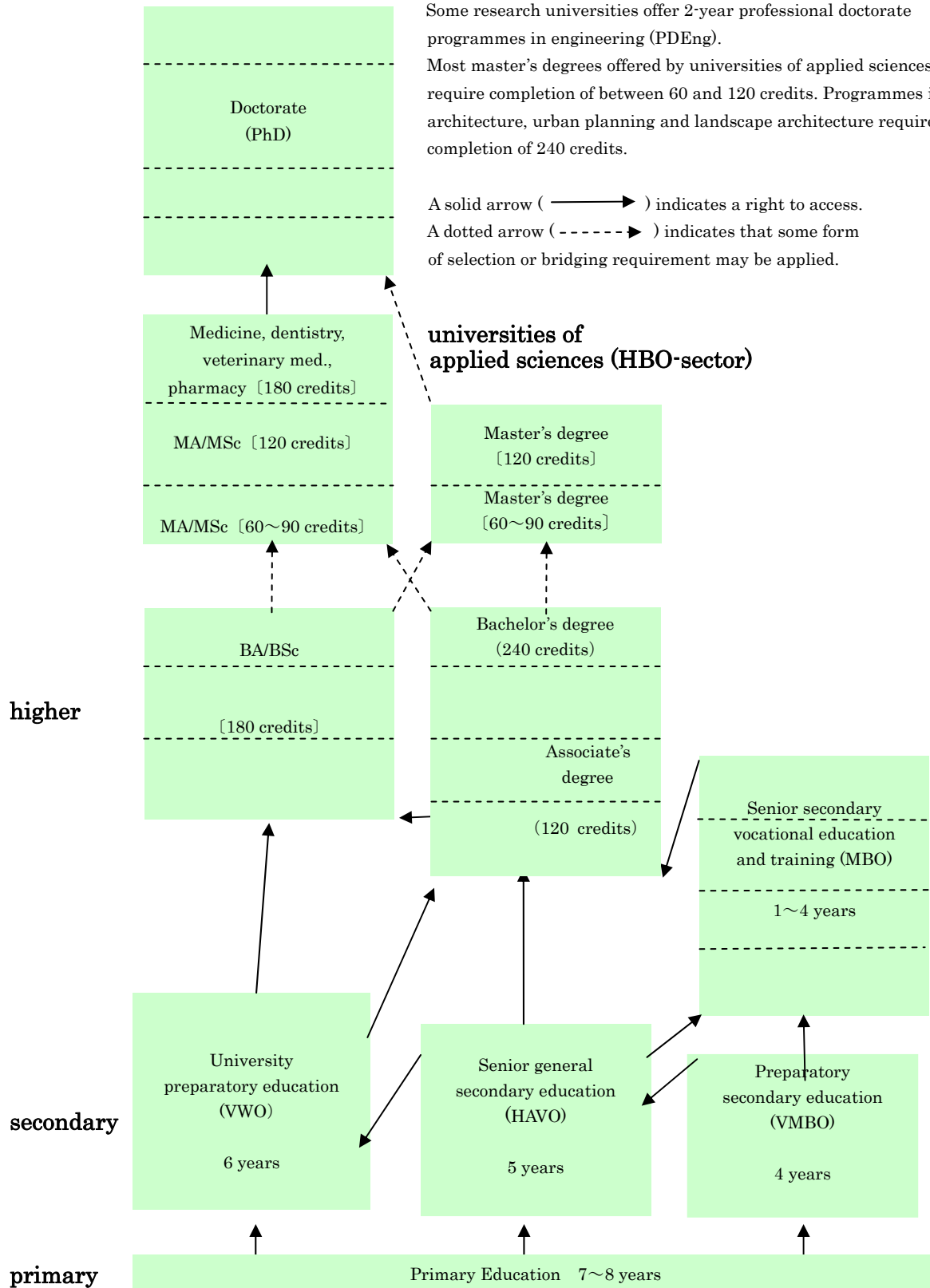
Most master's degrees offered by research universities require completion of 60~90 credits. Those in engineering, mathematics, natural sciences, and agriculture require 120 credits, in pharmacy, dentistry, medicine and veterinary medicine 180 credits.

Some research universities offer 2-year professional doctorate programmes in engineering (PDEng).

Most master's degrees offered by universities of applied sciences require completion of between 60 and 120 credits. Programmes in architecture, urban planning and landscape architecture require completion of 240 credits.

A solid arrow ( —————> ) indicates a right to access.

A dotted arrow ( - - - - -> ) indicates that some form of selection or bridging requirement may be applied.



Source: Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/international-students/dutch-education/education-system>

## 4. Types of institution

### 4-1) Overview

#### Research universities

The Dutch research universities are academic centres of excellence in research and teaching. At Dutch research universities, research and teaching interlock to provide unique experiences for both students and researchers. Traditionally open-minded and cosmopolitan, the Dutch research universities are internationally well connected and attach great importance to cooperation and interaction not only with academic institutions abroad but also with society and the private sector. Within disciplines and across disciplines, Dutch researchers cooperate, benefiting from the small size of the Netherlands. English as language of instruction and research is widely accepted at Dutch research universities. Excellent working conditions and career perspectives make them uniquely attractive for national and international talent.

Today, the Netherlands has 14 research universities including one Open University, all of which offer high-standard education and research. There are three universities of technology, the universities of Delft, Eindhoven and Twente, and one university, the University of Wageningen, which focuses on agriculture and life sciences. The remaining nine research universities are broad-based. There are also eight university medical centres.

Research universities vary in size, with enrolments ranging from 6,000 to 30,000. Altogether they enrol some 205,000 students.

#### Research universities in the Netherlands

Types of universities	Names of universities
Universities of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delft University of Technology: <a href="http://www.tudelft.nl">http://www.tudelft.nl</a></li> <li>• Eindhoven University of Technology: <a href="http://www.tue.nl">http://www.tue.nl</a></li> <li>• University of Twente: <a href="http://www.utwente.nl">http://www.utwente.nl</a></li> </ul>
University of agriculture and life sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wageningen University and Research Centre : <a href="http://www.wur.nl">http://www.wur.nl</a></li> </ul>
Distance teaching university focusing on lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open University in the Netherlands: <a href="http://www.ou.nl">http://www.ou.nl</a></li> </ul>
Universities with broad-based orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erasmus University Rotterdam: <a href="http://www.eur.nl">http://www.eur.nl</a></li> <li>• Leiden University: <a href="http://www.leidenuniv.nl">http://www.leidenuniv.nl</a></li> <li>• Maastricht University: <a href="http://www.unimaas.nl">http://www.unimaas.nl</a></li> <li>• Radboud University Nijmegen: <a href="http://www.ru.nl">http://www.ru.nl</a></li> <li>• Tilburg University: <a href="http://www.tilburguniversity.nl">http://www.tilburguniversity.nl</a></li> <li>• University of Amsterdam: <a href="http://www.uva.nl">http://www.uva.nl</a></li> <li>• State University of Groningen: <a href="http://www.rug.nl">http://www.rug.nl</a></li> <li>• Utrecht University: <a href="http://www.uu.nl">http://www.uu.nl</a></li> <li>• Free University Amsterdam: <a href="http://www.vu.nl">http://www.vu.nl</a></li> </ul>

## Research excellence

With its 14 research universities the Netherlands is rightly proud of its present track record. Talented young researchers are being trained for leading positions in tomorrow's world. The new graduate schools are broad-based and facilitate healthy competition. Conscious of their intellectual capacity and potential, young researchers are adept at seeking out top institutes equipped with the most advanced techniques and run by leading academics. That is why Dutch research universities are not only exploiting their own unique specialist fields but also their various reciprocal relations with corresponding universities and centres of excellence abroad.

Universities in the Netherlands are represented in all the major international ranking scales: nearly all Dutch research universities appear in the Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings and, according to that same ranking system, 11 are among World's top 200 universities in 2009\*. If one considers the relative impact scores for publications, Dutch universities do extremely well\*\*. Internationally the impact, especially in the field of science, is remarkable if one takes into account the small population (16,5 million inhabitants).

\* THE-QS 2009 World University Rankings for the Dutch universities: University of Amsterdam (49), Leiden University (60), Utrecht University (70), Delft University of Technology (83), Erasmus University Rotterdam (108), Maastricht University (116), Eindhoven University of Technology (120), State University of Groningen (138), Wageningen University (155), Free University Amsterdam (165), University of Twente (200).

\*\* 10-year country rankings for the Netherlands (1997-2007):

	Papers	Citations	Cites per paper
Total for the Netherlands	214,031	2666,383	12.46
Rank for the Netherlands	12	8	7

## Universities of applied sciences (Higher professional education institutions)

The study programmes offered by universities of applied sciences are career-oriented. This type of institution mainly focuses on education for professionals such as business managers, high school teachers, nurses as well as for several technical professions. Acquiring practical work experience through internships is an integral part of professional study programmes. Currently, the Netherlands has 42 government-approved universities of applied sciences. The largest enrol 20,000 to 39,000 students. Altogether some 350,000 students are enrolled on this type of higher education programmes.

## Institutes for international education

The Netherlands has been offering another form of higher education for more than 50 years: advanced courses taught in English in what is known as 'international education'. These institutes focus on development-oriented courses, based on working in small, intercultural groups and the exchange of knowledge, facilitated by teachers with extensive work experience in low-income countries.

In addition, the Netherlands has a large number of private teaching institutes and organisations that



offer recognised certificates, diplomas and degrees in various professional fields like accountancy, business administration, etc. Quite often these are structured as 'external studies' in the sense of correspondence and or distance learning courses with limited face-to-face interaction.

Source:

Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/>

Radboud University Nijmegen (2009): *Radboud University Nijmegen: ECTS Information Guide 2009-2010.*

VSNU website: <http://www.vsnu.nl/Home-english.htm>

Times Higher Education website: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/>

## 4-2) Statistics

### Number of institutions (2010)

Research universities (incl. Open University)	14
Universities of applied sciences	42
Institutes for international education	11
Total	67

### Number of students (2007-2008)

Research universities	211,446
Universities of applied sciences	373,532
Total	584,978

### Success rate at the research universities

	2004	2006	2008
Science	63%	51%	52%
Engineering and Technology	58%	55%	57%
Health	85%	78%	77%
Economics	62%	59%	61%
Law	56%	51%	55%
Behaviour and Society	64%	59%	59%
Language and Culture	52%	46%	42%
Agriculture and the Natural Environment	83%	80%	80%
Average success rates*	74%	69%	69%

\* The success rates for programmes at the research universities overall are higher than the success rates in each of the sectors, as some students graduate in a sector other than the one they started in.

### Number of English-taught programmes (2007-2008)

Degree programmes	956
Non-degree programmes	376
Total	1,332

### Academic staff at higher education institutions (2007)

	Research universities	Universities of applied sciences
Total number of staff	370,000	274,000
Academic staff	207,000	149,000
Support staff	163,000	125,000
Ratio of students to academic staff	10.0%	24.5%

### **International students in the Netherlands** (As of November 2009)

#### Number of foreign students\*

EU/EFTA students enrolled**	30,400
Non-EU/EFTA students enrolled	17,850
Exchange students	7,250
Other credit mobile students***	20,500
Total	76,000

\* Note that this is a general summary and figures are approximate. Enrolment refers to government-sponsored study programmes.

\*\* EFTA (European Free Trade Association): Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland.

\*\*\* Diploma mobility: to complete a study programme abroad; credit mobility: to gain credits abroad towards the programme at home.

#### Number of international students by countries of origin

Germany	19,750
China	5,000
Belgium	2,500
Spain	1,950
France	1,650
Japan	300

#### Popular degree programmes among international students

	Research universities	Universities of applied sciences
1	Economics	Economics
2	Behaviour and Society	Language and Culture
3	Technology	Technology
4	Language and Culture	Healthcare

Source:

*Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: Key Figures 2004-2008:*

*<http://english.minocw.nl/documenten/key%20figures%202004-2008.pdf>*

*Nuffic: Most people see windmills, Life and Study 2010/2011.*

*Nuffic: Most people come for the tulips, Life and Study 2009/2010.*

*European Commission: Eurybase - Organisation of the Education System in the Netherlands 2008/09.*

## 5. Enrolment

### 5-1) Requirements for access to higher education

For access to research-oriented bachelor's programmes at research universities, students are required to have a VWO (the university preparatory education) diploma or to have completed the first year (60 credits) of a bachelor's programme at a university of applied sciences.

The minimum access requirement to universities of applied sciences is either a HAVO (the senior general secondary education) diploma or a diploma of senior secondary vocational education (MBO diploma), provided certain conditions are met.

The VWO diploma also grants access to universities of applied sciences. For access to both types of higher education, pupils are required to have completed at least one of the subject clusters that fulfils the requirements for the higher education programme in question. A quota, or *numerus fixus*, applies for access to certain programmes, primarily in the medical sciences, and places are allocated mainly using a weighted lottery. Potential students older than 21 years of age who do not possess one of the qualifications mentioned above can qualify for access to higher education on the basis of an entrance examination and assessment (recognition of prior learning). For access to certain programmes, particularly those in the fine arts, students have to demonstrate the required artistic abilities.

The only access requirement for the Open University is that applicants be at least 18 years of age.

For access to all master's programmes, a bachelor's degree in one or more specified disciplines is required, in some cases in combination with other requirements. Graduates with a bachelor's degree in the applied arts and sciences may have to complete additional requirements for access to a research-oriented master's degree programme.

### 5-2) Transfers within higher education

Within higher education, students can transfer to a different level as well as to a different type of programme: after the preparatory year of a bachelor's programme with a professional orientation (HBO) to a bachelor's programme with an academic orientation (WO) or from a WO programme to an HBO programme. Students with an associate degree can transfer to the remaining section of a related bachelor's programme with a professional orientation. In principle, bachelor's degrees allow access to master's programmes, while master's degrees subsequently allow access to a PhD programme.

### 5-3) Admission requirements for international students

International students wishing to apply for a programme at a Dutch higher education institution should first contact the institution that offers the programme. Students should also note several points relating to admission requirements.

The main requirement for admission to a bachelor's programme is a secondary school diploma at the appropriate level. There are also study programmes, in the arts for example, for which

institutions set their own additional requirements. All international applicants who are not in possession of a Dutch VWO diploma (or a HBO diploma) have to apply for admission to have their foreign diploma evaluated. Students' diploma will then be evaluated in order to ascertain its level in comparison to the Dutch VWO diploma. For lists of diplomas that are considered to be approximately equivalent to the Dutch pre-university diploma (VWO), see the following website (Leiden University):

<http://prospectivestudents.leiden.edu/programmes/bachelor/admission/ba-bsc-requirements.html> (English and Dutch).

Master's programme applicants must have at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. In certain popular fields the number of places is limited and admission quotas are set.

As most programmes for international education are provided in English, it is essential that international students are able to speak, read and write English well. Students must have passed an English language test. IELTS and TOEFL are commonly accepted, but institutions may accept other tests as well. For the TOEFL the required scores are at least 550 (paper-based); for the IELTS a score of at least 6 is required. Language requirements for individual programmes or courses are indicated in the database of international courses on the following website: <http://www.studyin.nl/> (English).

## Where to find more information for international students

### Life and practical matters

**Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** <http://www.minbuza.nl/> (English, Dutch, German, Spanish and French)

The international homepage with address of Dutch embassies abroad.

**Immigration and Naturalization Service:** <http://www.ind.nl/> (English and Dutch)

Information on Dutch immigration laws.

**CBS (Statistics Netherlands):** <http://www.cbs.nl/> (English)

Statistics about the Netherlands.

**Expatica:** <http://www.expatica.com/> (English)

Informative and entertaining website with local and international news and feature articles on a variety of topics.

**Holland Handbook:** <http://www.xpat.nl/> (English)

An informative book on living and working in the Netherlands.

**Netherlands Board of Tourism:** <http://www.holland.com/> (English)

Netherlands Board of Tourism, including a map of the Netherlands.

**Preparing your stay:** <http://www.nuffic.nl/preparingyourstay> (English)

Brief description of how to arrange visas and permits, insurance, housing, diploma evaluation, etc.

**Staying in Holland:** <http://www.nuffic.nl/stayinginholland> (English)

For more information about formalities upon arrival, working while studying, traineeships and working after completing your studies.

## Study

1) International higher education-related body

**Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science:** <http://www.minocw.nl/> (English and Dutch)  
Information provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

**DUO (Education Executive Agency, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science):**

[http://ib-groep.nl/International\\_visitors/](http://ib-groep.nl/International_visitors/) (English)

DUO (former IB-Groep) is a semi-independent part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science with responsibility for implementing the Student Finance Act (WSF) and the study costs and allowance schemes. DUO website provides information about student grant, studying in the Netherlands, Diploma assessment.

**NVAO:** <http://www.nvao.net/> (English and Dutch)

Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders, the body responsible for the accreditation of existing programmes and assessment of new programmes.

**Nuffic:** <http://www.nuffic.nl/> (English and Dutch)

Nuffic is the Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education.

**VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands):** <http://www.vsnu.nl/> (English and Dutch)

VSNU represents the shared interests of the 14 research universities in the Netherlands in the fields of research, education, knowledge transfer, funding, personnel policy and international affairs.

**HBO-raad (The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences):**

<http://www.hbo-raad.nl/> (English and Dutch)

HBO-raad brings together all government-funded universities of applied sciences and higher professional education in the Netherlands.

**Access (Administrative Committee to Coordinate English-Speaking Services):**

<http://www.access-nl.org/> (English)

ACCESS is a not-for-profit organization committed to supporting the international expatriate community in the Netherlands.

**PIE (Platform for International Education in the Netherlands):** <http://www.pieonline.nl/> (English)

PIE promotes activities of the Dutch institutes for post-secondary education in the field of institutional strengthening of education and research capacity in developing countries and countries in transition, through education, research and consultancy for students, staff and mid-career professionals.

**SAIL (Council of Institutes for Postgraduate International Education in the Netherlands):**

<http://www.sail-international-education.nl/> (English)

SAIL is the umbrella organisation of five specialised Dutch centres of higher learning, all of which are geared towards capacity building, education, research, and advisory services particularly in and for developing countries.

**IDW:** <http://www.idw.nl/> (English and Dutch)  
Information Centre for Credential Evaluation.

2) International higher education-related website

**Internationalstudy:** <http://www.internationalstudy.nl/> (English)

Code of conduct and a list of higher education institutions in the Netherlands that have signed the Code.

**Studychoice:** <http://www.studychoice.nl/> (English and Dutch)

A website providing information about higher education study in the Netherlands.

**Study in Holland:** <http://www.studyinholland.nl/> (English)

Everything you need to know about studying in the Netherlands. Database of English-taught study programmes.

**Grossroads:** <http://www.grossroads.eu/> (English)

An overview of all accredited programmes and institutions in a number of European countries.

**Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), *Studie in Nederland* (Study in the Netherlands):**

[http://www.jasso.go.jp/study\\_a/oversea\\_info\\_ne.html](http://www.jasso.go.jp/study_a/oversea_info_ne.html) (Japanese)

This site provides useful information for Japanese students who wish to study in the Netherlands.

### Scholarships

**Grantfinder:** <http://www.grantfinder.nl/> (English)

Online search engine which brings together a range of Dutch scholarships for international students.

**Scholarships:** <http://www.nuffic.nl/scholarships> (English and Dutch)

Nuffic information about scholarships for international students.

*Source:*

*Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science:*

*<http://english.minocw.nl/documenten/OCW-NVAO%20Folder%20ENG%20def.pdf>*

*Nuffic: Most people come for the tulips, Life and Study 2009/2010.*

*Nuffic: Most students prepare for a study, International Degree Programmes 2009/2010.*

### 5-4) Ethnic minorities in higher education

The Netherlands is increasingly becoming a multi-cultural society. The country is home to many immigrants from the former overseas territories of Indonesia, Surinam, Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles\*, as well as from Turkey, Morocco and other countries. Of the current population, about

18 % are of recent foreign descent. Over the period from 2003 to 2007, the proportion of (Western and non-Western) ethnic minority students entering the Dutch tertiary education rose to nearly 30 per cent of the total number of first-year students.

\* Both Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles are island countries in the Caribbean Sea that form the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Since 1954, the federation of the Netherlands Antilles, which is a constituent part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, has been semi-autonomous in most internal affairs. Aruba was part of this federation until 1<sup>st</sup> January 1986, when it gained a separate status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Aruban citizens hold Dutch passports

#### Intake of ethnic minorities (2008)

Country	Rates	
	Research university	University of applied sciences
Surinam	5%	10%
Morocco	2%	9%
Turkey	4%	10%
Netherlands Antilles	3%	6%
Other non-Western countries	24%	20%
Western countries	62%	45%

Source:

*Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences: Key Figures 2004-2008*

<http://english.minocw.nl/documenten/key%20figures%202004-2008.pdf>

*Radboud University Nijmegen (2009): Radboud University Nijmegen: ECTS Guide 2009-2010.*

*Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/>*

*U.S. Department of State website: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/index.htm>*

## **6. Courses and qualifications**

Since the signing of the Bologna declaration in 1999, a number of changes have occurred in higher education in the Netherlands and throughout Europe. The idea of the Bologna declaration was to create a European Higher Education Area in which easily understandable and comparable degrees were developed. A bachelor/master structure and a system of credits were introduced in order to promote national and international mobility, as well as European cooperation in assuring quality.

### **6-1) Credit system**

#### **ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System)**

In accordance with the Bologna declaration, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)\* was further developed by the European Commission of the EU in order to provide common procedures to guarantee academic recognition of studies abroad. The EU introduced this standardised system for measuring study load as a way to facilitate international mobility. The Netherlands higher education institutions adopted the ECTS system officially in 2002. It provides a way of measuring and comparing learning achievements, and transferring them from one institution

to another. ECTS is a decentralised system based upon the principle of mutual trust between participating institutions. The few rules of ECTS, which concern information (on courses available), agreement (between the home and host institution), and the use of credits (to indicate student workload), are intended to as reinforcements of this mutual trust.

One ECTS credit represents 28 hours of full-time study (including contact hours, reading, independent study, presentation for exams etc.). The study programme for every academic year consists of 60 ECTS (1,680 hours).

\* ECTS is used today as part of the curricular design but it is useful to recall that this European credit system was developed long before the Bologna declaration, namely in 1988 in the context of the Erasmus exchange programme to facilitate recognition of study abroad periods. In addition, many countries had a long history of using credits, for example, the Baltic States, Hungary, Ireland, the Nordic countries, the UK and Turkey. It was only with the launch of the Bologna reforms that ECTS was further developed as a credit accumulation system at national level and gradually mainstreamed as a generalised credit system for the European Higher Education Area.

## 6-2) Curriculum

### Study load

Dutch law (Higher Education and Research Act: WHW) defines the bachelor's degree programme in terms of the number of ECTS credits a student must obtain before the degree can be awarded. It makes a clear distinction between the bachelor's degree awarded by traditional research universities and those awarded by universities of applied sciences (HBO). In research universities a bachelor's degree is awarded to students who obtain 180 ECTS credits, while in universities of applied sciences 240 ECTS credits are required. This is because there is a difference in the secondary education stage. For research universities this is at a higher level and therefore a student at university of applied sciences needs to obtain more ECTS credits in order to achieve an equivalent level. The emphasis in universities of applied sciences education, however, is on training for profession. The minimum number of ECTS credits needed to obtain a master's degree is prescribed by law as well: 60 ECTS credits are needed for most master's degree programmes (usually in the field of the humanities, economics, social sciences and law); 120 ECTS credits are required for some programmes (mainly in the field of natural sciences); whereas other programmes vary from 180 ECTS (as in medical sciences) to 240 ECTS credits.

### Organisation of education

#### **Lectures**

A lecture is a broad introduction to the subject matter under consideration, where one lecturer speaks to a large group of students. Sometimes there is an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the session, which normally lasts for one hour and 45 minutes, including a 15-minutes break. The lecturer will offer suggestions for further reading.



### **Seminars**

A seminar is an interactive, in-depth discussion of the subject matter. A member of the teaching staff meets with a small group of 10 to 30 students. Active participation of the students is required. Sometimes students do an oral presentation for the group, the aims of which are to acquire knowledge and understanding of the topic under consideration as well as to gain confidence, assertiveness, and poise.

### **Tutorials**

A small group of students studies and discusses selected topics with a member of the teaching staff. The discussions may be based on essential reading or on prepared written work. The topic is analysed in depth. Tutorials are normally only held when the number of students is too small to justify offering a lecture or a seminar.

### **Papers**

Papers or essays can vary in length from a few hundred to a few thousand words. Students are usually instructed on the maximum length of the paper well in advance. In a paper, students must show their insight into the topic under consideration and show that they have studied the essential literature; that they are able to analyse the topic, and that they can express themselves clearly and concisely. The lecturer usually set a deadline for the paper to be handed in.

### **Course work**

During the semester, students are expected to participate actively in any course they take. This means preparing for lectures and seminars, doing the necessary homework and carrying out the appropriate assignments. All of this is referred to as course work.

### **Assessment**

Courses may be assessed in various ways, for instance by means of papers, or written or oral exams. These are meant to assess the student's comprehension of the subject matter discussed in lectures, seminars or tutorials. An oral exam normally lasts 30 minutes to 1 hour. Written exams normally last 2 to 3 hours. During a written exam, students have to answer open, multiple choice, and/or essay-type questions.

### **Grading scale**

Most Dutch higher education institutions use the traditional Dutch grading scale which runs from 10 (highest mark) to 1 (lowest mark) instead of the ECTS grading scale but there is compatibility between the two systems (see table below). In traditional Dutch grading scale, the lowest pass grade is 6, while grades 9 and 10 are rarely given. Grades between 5 and 6 are usually rounded up from 5.5, which means that 5.4 is a fail and 5.5 a pass. However, whether a grade signifies a pass or not is the prerogative of the board of examiners of the department.

The ECTS grading scale has been developed in order to help institutions translate the grades awarded by host institutions to ECTS students. It provides information on the student's performance in addition to that provided by the institution's grade; it does not replace the local grade.

### The ECTS grading scale and Dutch grading scale

ECTS grade	Dutch grade	Definition
A	10	EXCELLENT: outstanding performance with only minor errors
B	9	VERY GOOD: above the average standard but with some errors
C	8	GOOD: generally sound work with a number of notable errors
D	7	SATISFACTORY: fair but with significant shortcomings
E	6	SUFFICIENT: performance meets the minimum criteria
FX	5-1	FAIL (FX): some more work required before the credit can be awarded
F		FAIL (F): considerable further work is required

### 6-3) Degrees

As a result of the Bologna Process, the higher education system in the Netherlands is currently organised around a three-cycle degree system, consisting of bachelor's, master's and PhD degrees.

Students who have successfully completed the first phase will receive a bachelor's degree. A master's degree will be awarded after successful completion of the second phase. The Dutch equivalent of these titles, *doctorandus (drs.)*, *ingenieur (ir.)*, *meester (mr.)*, may still be used. Students who have completed their graduate studies are eligible to progress to a doctorate.

### Table of degrees

	Research universities	Universities of applied sciences	Institutes for international education
PhD	4 years		
Master (M)		1-2 years (60-120 ECTS)	
Master of Arts (MA)	1-2 years (60-120 ECTS)		1-2 years
Master of Science (MSc)	1-2 years (60-120 ECTS)		1-2 years
Bachelor (B)		4 years (240 ECTS)	
Bachelor of Arts (BA)	3 years (180 ECTS)		
Bachelor of Science (BSc)	3 years (180 ECTS)		

### 6-4) Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement (DS) is a document based on European model that accompanies a person's higher education certificate. It provides a description of the nature, level, context and status of the modules that were followed and successfully completed. It also provides a transcript of records and a description of the national educational framework within which the qualification in question was

awarded. The Diploma Supplement is intended to provide international transparency and facilitate fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates) awarded in Europe. The Diploma Supplement is produced by the higher education institutions themselves. They do this according to a template that has been developed by jointly by the European Union's Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. It is composed of the following eight sections:

- Information identifying the holder of the qualification,
- Information identifying the qualification,
- Information on the level of the qualification,
- Information on the contents and results gained,
- Information on the function of the qualification,
- Additional information,
- Certification of the Supplement,
- Information on the national higher education system.

Officially, the Diploma Supplement was introduced in all Dutch institutions of higher education as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

*Source:*

*State University of Groningen (2009): Welcome to the State University of Groningen: A Handbook for International Students 2009-2010.*

*Radboud University Nijmegen (2009): Radboud University Nijmegen: ECTS Information Guide 2009-2010.*

*Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/>*

*State University of Groningen website: <http://www.rug.nl/>*

*Leiden University website: <http://www.leiden.edu/>*

*Qrossroads website: <http://www.qrossroads.eu/>*

*European University Association (2010): Trends 2010: A Decade of Change in European Higher Education.*

## **7. Responsible authorities and higher education related bodies**

### **Government departments**

Government departments are responsible for overall public policy for higher education. They are the source of the public funds that support higher education institutions.

- Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: <http://www.minocw.nl/>
- DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs: The Education Executive Agency, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science): [http://ib-groep.nl/International\\_visitors/default.asp](http://ib-groep.nl/International_visitors/default.asp)

### **Research councils**

- NWO (The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research): <http://www.nwo.nl/>
- KNAW (The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences): <http://www.knaw.nl/>

## Representative organisations

- VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands): <http://www.vsnu.nl/>
- HBO-raad (Association of Universities of Applied Sciences): <http://www.hbo-raad.nl/>

## Quality assurance and international cooperation organisations

- NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders): <http://www.nvao.net/>
- QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities): <http://www.qanu.nl/>
- Certiked VBI bv (Lloyd's Register Nederland B.V.): <http://www.certiked-vbi.nl/>
- EAPAA (European Association for Public Administration Accreditation): <http://www.eapaa.org/>
- Hobéon (Hobéon Certificering bv): <http://www.hobeon.nl/>
- NQA (Netherlands Quality Agency): <http://www.nqa.nl/>
- Nuffic (Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education): <http://www.nuffic.nl/>
- CROHO (Central Register of Higher Education Programmes): <http://www.ib-groep.nl/zakelijk/ho/croho/croho.asp>
- ENIC/NARIC Netherlands (Centre for International Recognition and Certification: CIRC): <http://www.nuffic.nl/>
- ASIIN (Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik e.V.): <http://www.asiin-ev.de/> (NVAO-accredited quality assessment agency)
- FIBAA (Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation): <http://www.fibaa.de/> (NVAO-accredited quality assessment agency)

## **8. Student organisations**

**The Dutch National Union of Students (LSVb):** <http://www.lsvb.nl/> (English and Dutch)

LSVb (The Dutch National Union of Students) which was established in 1983 is a federation which consists of twelve local students' unions in the Netherlands. These local unions safeguard the rights of students in their own town and at their own university. The LSVb has been ensuring that national and local governments, universities and the DUO (Education Executive Agency) take the interests of the students into account. By talking with members of the Parliament, the Minister of education and other higher-education stakeholders, LSVb makes sure that the voice of the students is being heard. By carrying out these works, LSVb keeps higher education available for all students, maintains and improves the quality of education and gets the rents for student housing at an acceptable rate. LSVb also supports students by providing trainings and by giving them free legal support.

**AIESEC:** <http://www.aiesec.nl/> (English)

AIESEC (Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales) which was founded in 1948 is an international student organisation active in over 100 countries and at over 1,100 universities. AIESEC focuses on increasing the intercultural understanding and personal development of its members. AIESEC in the Netherlands organises several programmes such as the international internship programme in which Dutch students go abroad and foreign students come to the Netherlands; the Ambassadors Programme, an exchange programme that offers first and second-year students the opportunity to spend two months in an AIESEC country during the summer.

**AEGEE:** <http://www.aegEE.org/> (English)

AEGEE (Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe) established in 1985 is a non-political, European student club. At present, the AEGEE network consists of approximately 13,000 students, and extends to more than 180 localities in and outside Europe. The aim of AEGEE is to promote peace and stability, intercultural exchange, higher education and active citizenship. Many events are organised within the network, for instance, conference, Summer Universities, exchange programmes, European Schools and European member meetings.

*Source:*

*The Dutch National Union of Students (LSVb) website: <http://www.lsvb.nl/>*

*AIESEC the Netherlands website: <http://www.aiesec.nl/>*

*AEGEE website: <http://www.aegEE.org/>*

*State University of Groningen (2009): Welcome to the State University of Groningen: A Handbook for International Students 2009-2010.*

*Radboud University Nijmegen (2009): Radboud University Nijmegen: ECTS Information Guide 2009-2010.*

## **9. Tuition fees and student aid**

### **9-1) Tuition fees**

The Dutch research universities charge tuition fees for both bachelor's and master's programmes, varying according to university and academic discipline. The height of the tuition fees applying to students younger than 30, of Dutch or EU nationality and enrolled on a full-time study programme is determined by government. For other students, the universities themselves determine the amount to be paid. These include full time students older than 30 years, non EU students or other foreign students not eligible for student support, and part time students. The annual tuition fees for enrolment on a degree programmes or course at a Dutch higher education institution start at approximately 1,600 Euro for EU students. Generally tuition fees are higher for non-EU students than for Dutch and EU students, and Dutch and EU students are charged higher fees if they are older than 30 years.

## 9-2) Student finance

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science guarantees the accessibility of higher education and the government is responsible for financial support for students. Students can take out a grant or loan from the Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (Education Executive Agency), abbreviated to DUO, the Dutch Government institution that deals with financial issues for students in the Netherlands.

Dutch students studying at a research university or a university of applied sciences are generally entitled to student finance from the Dutch government under certain conditions. This is laid down in the Student Finance Act (WSF 2000). DUO implements the Act on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (DUO exists since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010. Until then, DUO was the Informatie Beeheer Groep: IB-Groep).

Monthly student finance amounts vary according to whether the student lives at home or not, with a basic grant for all students and a supplementary grant which depends on parents' income. Student grants are available for students who are younger than 30 years at the point of enrolment and enrolled in full-time or dual education. Non-Dutch students with certain types of residence permits are also eligible for the student grants.

EU/EEA\* students who do not meet the criteria for a student grant can apply for loans covering tuition fees which have to be repaid after graduation. Dutch students receiving a student grant may also apply for those loans.

\* The EU/EEA countries are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Norway, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

### Conditions attached to student finance

Students at research universities or universities of applied sciences are entitled to student finance for education when they meet the following conditions:

- Students who are younger than 30 the moment they apply for student finance and the moment they are entitled to it for the first time
- Students who follow a full-time course or work-study programme in a higher education institution (a research university or a university of applied sciences)
- Students who possess Dutch nationality.

### Performance-based grant

Students pursuing university education at a research university on higher professional education at a university of applied sciences receive a performance-based grant. Students initially receive their performance-based grant in the form of a loan. When students obtain their diploma within ten years, this loan is forgiven; if they do not do so, then they must repay their performance-related grant. The performance-related grant is composed of a basic grant, a supplementary grant and a student travel product, or student travel grant.

## Types of student finance

Student finance is comprised of:

1. Basic grant
2. Supplementary grant
3. Student travel product
4. Loans
5. Tuition fees loan (solely for research university or university of applied sciences education).

### 1. Basic grant

Everyone entitled to student finance receives a basic grant. The basic grant awarded to most students is part of the performance-related grant. When students live away from home they receive a higher basic grant than when they live with parents, which is only logical, since their costs related to studying will be higher. Students who look after a child are entitled to a supplement to their basic grant.

### 2. Supplementary grant

In addition to applying for a basic grant, students can also apply for a supplementary grant. The supplementary grant awarded to most students is, in common with the basic grant, part of the performance-related grant. The amount of their supplementary grant depends on their parents' income.

### 3. Student travel product

The student travel product is part of student finance. Students are entitled to the student travel product for the entire period they are entitled to student finance. The student travel product can be used for travel by train, bus, metro and tram free of charge or at a reduced rate. Students can choose a season ticket for travelling during the week or at weekends. For most students the student travel product, like the basic grant and the supplementary grant, is part of the performance-related grant.

### 4. Loans

Students can take out a loan from DUO in addition to their basic grant and supplementary grant. They can borrow the maximum amount, or less. However, when deciding whether to take out a loan, students should bear in mind that a loan is independent of their student study results and they need to repay only once they have finished their study. In addition, they must pay interest on the loan: in 2010 the interest rate is 2.39 percent per annum.

When students are no longer entitled to a performance-related grant but are still registered as a full-time student then they can continue to borrow from DUO for a period of three years, a period which is referred to as the 'lending phase'. Students may borrow a maximum amount of 853.16 Euro per month during the lending phase (2010): self-evidently, students can also decide on a lower loan. They can also decide not to borrow during the lending phase (a zero loan).

## 5. Tuition fees loan

In addition to an 'ordinary' loan, students at a research university or a university of applied sciences (HBO-sector) can also apply for a loan to pay their tuition fees. This loan, referred to as a 'tuition fees loan' is part of student finance. Students can apply for this tuition fees loan at the same time as their performance-related grant and, where applicable, ordinary loan. In principle, the repayment phase of a loan is of a fifteen-year duration. The tuition fees loan is paid in monthly instalments. DUO determines the amount of the monthly instalment by dividing students' total debt by 180 months (fifteen years). This results in the monthly instalment, with a minimum of 45.41 Euro per month. If students have difficulty paying the specified monthly instalment then they can submit a request to have their monthly instalment reduced. DUO then calculates the amount they could repay on the basis of their income two years ago.

## Amounts of student finance

The tables below show the amounts students can receive. All amounts listed in the tables are maximum amounts.

### Higher education, average monthly amounts (2010)

Types of student finance	Living at your parents' home	Away
Basic grant	95.61	266.23
Supplementary grant	220.08	240.00
Loans	288.46	288.46
Tuition fees loan (Institutional tuition fees)	137.17	137.17

(Unit: Euro)

## Additional income limit

In 2010 students are permitted to earn an additional annual income of up to 13,215.83 Euro alongside their student finance. Even when they have a 'zero loan' they still make use of student finance, and consequently the additional income limit is also applicable to them. This relates to their aggregate income or taxable wage.

## Student finance outside the Netherlands

Since 2007, student grants have also been available for Dutch students studying abroad. This is the case not only for students who remain registered at a Dutch research university or a university of applied sciences while spending a limited period studying abroad, but also for those who are not registered at a Dutch research university or a university of applied sciences and follow a degree programme abroad. Apart from the conditions applicable to all student grants, three more conditions apply to student grants for studying abroad:

- *Three years in the Netherlands:* Out of the six years preceding enrolment abroad, the student needs to have spent at least three years in the Netherlands.
- *No other grant:* The student must not receive any student allowance by a foreign government. Students must choose between either student finance from the Netherlands or a grant from the country in which they are studying. They cannot receive both.



- *Quality of degree programmes abroad*: The study programme abroad needs to meet certain standards. There is a special body, Nuffic (Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education), which checks on DUO's behalf whether the degree programme they want to follow abroad satisfies the Dutch requirements for higher education.

### Student finance for non-Dutch citizens

One of the general conditions to be met for an entitlement to student finance is the possession of Dutch nationality. However, in certain situations students who do not have Dutch nationality are still entitled to student finance. More information about the details of student finance for non-Dutch citizens can be found on the DUO website:

[http://www.ib-groep.nl/International\\_visitors/default.asp](http://www.ib-groep.nl/International_visitors/default.asp) (English)

## 9-3) Scholarships for international students

### Scholarships coordinated by Nuffic

**Huygens Scholarship Programme:** <http://www.nuffic.nl/hsp> (English and Dutch)

The Huygens Scholarship Programme (HSP) is open to students from all countries of the world. It is intended for students who have an excellent academic record and want to study in the Netherlands during the final phase of their bachelor's studies or during their master's studies. PhD applications are accepted from students from a limited number of countries.

**Erasmus Mundus:** [http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc72\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc72_en.htm) (English, German and French)

Erasmus Mundus is a programme of the European Commission. The aim is to enhance quality in higher education through scholarships and academic cooperation between Europe and the rest of the world. The Erasmus Mundus programme offers financial support for institutions and scholarships for individuals. Funding is available for:

- Action 1 - European joint programmes;
- Action 2 - Partnerships with non-European higher education institutions and scholarships for students and academics;
- Action 3 - Projects to promote European higher education worldwide.

Erasmus Mundus joint programmes are comprised of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses (EMMCs), Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates (EMJDs). European Commission provides full-study scholarships for students and researchers of exceptional quality, and scholarships for academics to teach on EMMCs.

**Tempus:** <http://www.ec.europa.eu/tempus> (English, German and French)

The Tempus programme allows universities in a number of countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region to establish partnership with institutions in the European Union as a means to help them restructure their higher education systems.

**Netherlands Fellowship Programmes:** <http://www.nuffic.nl/nfp> (English)

The Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP) are demand-driven fellowship programmes designed to foster capacity building within organisations in 57 developing countries by providing training and education to mid-career employees. The NFP are funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs development cooperation budget.

Apart from the scholarships coordinated by Nuffic, a number of Dutch higher education institutions also offer their own scholarships. These scholarships are often related to a specific field of study and/or degree programme at a specific institution. Students are strongly recommended to find out whether scholarships are available in their particular field of study.

Reference:

- The Dutch Embassy or Consulate: <http://www.mfa.nl/> (English and Dutch)
- The international office at your home institution
- The Neso Office (Nuffic overseas office), consult the list on <http://www.nuffic.nl/neso> (English)
- The Dutch higher education institution of your choice, to which you are applying in the Netherlands; they can inform you about scholarships offered
- Website Grantfinder to get an overview of all current scholarships: <http://www.grantfinder.nl/> (English)

Source:

*Nuffic website:* <http://www.nuffic.nl/>

*Nuffic: Most people come for the tulips, Life and Study 2009/2010.*

*Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) (2007): Higher Education in the Netherlands: Country report.*

*VSNU website:* <http://www.vsnu.nl/Home-english.htm>

*DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs) (2009): Everything about student finance for students and graduates:* [http://www.ib-groep.nl/International\\_visitors/](http://www.ib-groep.nl/International_visitors/)

*European Commission Education & Training website:* <http://ec.europa.eu/education/>

*European Commission (2010): Erasmus Mundus: International Quality Assurance - the Erasmus Mundus Experience (NIAD-UE Seminar presentation material, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

## 10. Legislation

- The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) 1993 (amended 2002)
- The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) 1996
- The Student Finance Act (WSF) 2000

## 11. Ongoing debates in Dutch higher education

The basis of a sound knowledge society is a well-educated working population. If one wishes to ensure prosperity and well-being for the future, as many people as possible must be able to perform work at a higher knowledge level. However, it has been widely discussed that the Netherlands lacks well-trained personnel. The percentage of people with a higher level of education is increasing in the Netherlands, but in order to meet the demands of the labour market, more students will have to participate in research university and university of applied sciences education. There is also concern expressed, for instance, by OECD regarding the opportunities for progression within the education system for pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds. In addition to satisfactory progression within the education system, reducing the drop-out rate in higher education (there is a concern that the student drop-out rate in the Dutch universities is excessive: approximately 30 to 40 % have no final diploma) will increase the percentage of people with a higher level of education.

### Strategic agenda for higher education

Many of those involved in Dutch higher education and science are enthusiastic about improving higher education. In 2007, Dutch Government drew up and published a strategic agenda for higher education, research and science policy after close consultations with research universities, universities of applied sciences and students. The intended approach regarding Government extra investment is as follows:

- **Greater academic success for students**

Government aims to greatly reduce the student drop-out rate in the bachelor phase. This aim is not related to students who switch to another course, but to those who drop out of higher education and do not return. An interim assessment will be made in 2011, when the drop-out reduction must be 30%. The success rates of immigrant students must also be improved.

- **Greater quality and excellence**

The basic quality must be maintained, but Government wishes to challenge research universities and universities of applied sciences to provide more than that basic quality. In addition, more students should study more than just the basic programme. Differentiation in education and intensive supervision are very important in this respect. An important consideration in the case of quality improvement is the training level of tutors.

- **The link between education, research and the labour market**

Proper interaction between courses, research and employers improves the quality of education and professional practice.

*Source:*

*Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2008): Strategic Agenda for Higher Education, Research and Science Policy.*

*Studentnews.eu website: <http://tertiary-education.studentnews.eu/>*

### **III. The quality assurance system**

#### **1. Summary of the Dutch quality assurance system**

Higher education in the Netherlands enjoys a worldwide reputation for its high quality. This is achieved through a national system of regulation and quality assurance. Quality assurance at Dutch universities concerns research groups as well as degree programmes. Research groups are subject to a research assessment scheme, degree programmes are monitored in an accreditation scheme.

##### Research assessment

Many research universities make use of the national evaluation system for publicly funded research in the Netherlands. In 2003, the way that academic research in the Netherlands was assessed changed radically. Previously, research assessments were conducted once every five years nationally and per discipline, and were organised by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU). In the new system the responsibility for assessing research lies with the institutions themselves. This means that the Board of each university is responsible for organising adequate, thorough, independent assessments of all research conducted at the institution.

In the new evaluation system all publicly funded research is evaluated once every six years. Once every three years research units will produce a self-evaluation, alternating between preparations for the external evaluation and serving as an internal mid-term evaluation. The evaluation system aims at three objectives:

- Improvement of the quality of research
- Improvement of research management
- Accountability to higher levels of the research organisations and funding agencies, government, and society at large.

##### Accreditation

All university degree courses are permanently subjected to internal quality control and external assessment. According to the Higher Education and Accreditation Act, all degree programmes offered by research universities and universities of applied sciences must be evaluated according to the established criteria. The current system of external quality assurance started in 2002/3 with the introduction of the bachelor/master structure in the Netherlands. All degree programmes have to be accredited by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) to be eligible for government funding of bachelor's and master's degree programme, for the right to award recognised diplomas and to grant financial assistance to students. Accredited programmes are listed in the Central Register of Higher Education Programmes (CROHO). In the context of the internationalisation of education and the labour market, accreditation provides for an equivalence of quality assurance in higher education.

Accreditation is granted on the basis of an evaluation report produced once every six years by an external quality assessment agency. The assessment panel of the agency judges the self-evaluation report of the programme under review and carries out the site-visit. Protocols ensure a transparent,

systematic and reliable assessment of programmes in accordance with national and international benchmarks. Failure either to comply with or to meet the standards laid down in these protocols amounting to a negative accreditation decision leads to the sanctions mentioned above (no government recognition and funding, no student grants and loans). Within the framework of the Bologna process European countries are working towards the mutual recognition of their accreditation decisions.

*Source:*

*Nuffic: Higher Education in the Netherlands*

*Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/>*

*VSNU website: <http://www.vsnu.nl/Home-english.htm>*

*State University of Groningen website: <http://www.rug.nl/corporate/index>*

*Radboud University Nijmegen (2009): Radboud University Nijmegen: ECTS Information Guide 2009-2010.*

*Delft University of Technology website: <http://home.tudelft.nl/en/>*

## **2. Historical background**

Since the early 1980s, Dutch education policy has been geared to assign educational institutions more and more responsibility for setting and raising standards in education.

In higher education, as well as internal evaluation by institutions themselves, external quality assessments were also carried out. Since the 1990s, Dutch universities have had an external check on the quality of teaching in the form of assessments by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU). Over a five-year cycle all university programmes in the Netherlands were scrutinised by an experts committee installed by VSNU, which assessed the quality of the programmes and presented its findings in a public report. When the bachelor/master system was introduced in 2002 this external quality assurance was modified.

The existing quality assessment system is now linked to the accreditation of programmes. A special organisation has been set up to award accreditations, the NVAO (the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders). The NVAO decides whether a programme can be accredited, based on the data supplied by a quality assessment agency. In the case of new programmes (initial accreditation) NVAO carries out the assessment itself.

### Before 1980

- No systematic quality assurance system
- Strong government regulations through legal measures and Academic Statute

### During the 1980s

- More students, more focus on efficiency (less budget), less trust in academic self control
- France, UK and the Netherlands were the pioneers on external quality assurance (European Quality Networks)

- 1985 - Universities in the Netherlands agree on external peer review of all degree programmes

### During the 1990s

- 1993 - Higher Education and Research Act (WHW)
- Since 1988 system of an external check on the quality of university teaching in the form of quality assessments under supervision of the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands)
- Selection of external peers by VSNU
- Every 6 year, every programme (economics, etc) was reviewed by the committee of 'colleagues' (peer reviews), focusing on quality enhancement but with publication of the reports (accountability)
- Monitoring role for the inspection of higher education (meta-evaluation) when the VSNU reports indicated insufficient quality. In the worst case the Minister of Education could close a programme although in practice this never happened.
- 1999 - Bologna declaration

### 2002-2010

- 2002 - Amendment of Higher Education and Research Act
- 2002 - Introduction of bachelor - master - doctorate structure
- 2002 - Introduction of the Dutch Law on accreditation (Higher Education and Accreditation Act 2002)
- 2002 and 2005 - Establishment of the Netherlands Accreditation Organisation in 2002 (NAO) and the NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders) in 2003 (formally established by ratification of the Accreditation Treaty by the Dutch and Flemish governments in 2005)
- 2003 - Introduction of programme accreditation by NVAO
- 2003 - Introduction of new system of research assessment

### 2011 -

- 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of accreditation - Introduction of new accreditation system
  - Institutional audit by NVAO, in which the internal quality assurance system of the higher education institutions will be checked and evaluated
  - Programme accreditation, in which the "ambition and objectives" (the intended learning outcomes), the content and the results (the achieved learning outcomes) are evaluated by peers. Limited programme assessment when the institutional audit is positive and comprehensive programme assessment otherwise.

Source:

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO): Reforming Quality Assurance and Accreditation in the Netherlands (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*European Commission: Eurybase - Organisation of the Education System in the Netherlands 2008/09.*

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/NL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/NL_EN.pdf)

*VSNU: Quality assurance and accreditation in the Netherlands.*

*NVAO (2009): 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of Accreditation – the Netherlands and Flanders.*

*State University of Groningen (2005): Integrated Quality Assurance for Education at the State University of Groningen.*

### **3. Quality assurance system in Dutch higher education**

#### **3-1) Internal quality assurance**

Higher education institutions are responsible for the quality of their teaching and for the system they use to guarantee that quality. Such a system may have five distinct elements:

- Clearly formulated course objectives
- A monitoring system, from which it is possible to see whether the objectives are indeed being achieved. This includes a properly functioning system for recording students' progress and the keeping of records on success rates and the number of students who drop out
- Internal evaluation by the staff concerned
- Student evaluations of each course
- Surveys among graduates and employers.

Internal evaluations may look, among others, at the following areas:

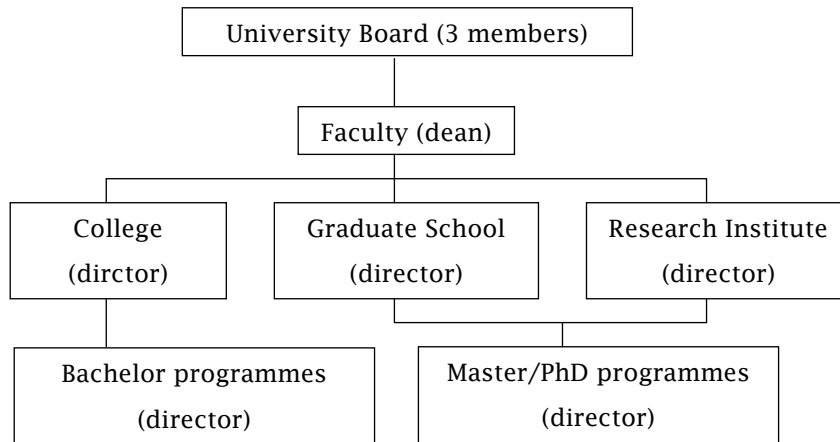
- Teaching
- Exit qualifications
- Content
- Teaching process
- Success rate and parameters
- Services to the community
- The institution's policy.

Research is subject to a separate quality assurance system (please refer to 3-2-1) Research assessment, page 37). Self-evaluation is the instrument used for internal evaluations. The board of each research university and university of applied sciences is responsible for internal evaluation (self-evaluation).

### Example of internal quality assurance at research university

Below are the summaries of internal quality assurance system at the University of Amsterdam.

#### ◇ Organisation for internal quality assurance



#### ◇ Other participants for internal quality assurance

- Students
  - Written or oral assessments of course
  - Bachelor and master survey
  - Programme Committee
  - Student council (faculty level, central level)
  - Student association
- Staff
  - Programme director
  - Oral assessment of courses
  - Programme committee\*
  - Examination Board
  - Works council
- External
  - Alumni
  - Professional field

\* Programme committee is composed of 50% students and 50% lecturers and undertakes assessment of the quality of all educational activities (courses, internships, facilities, student counselling, etc.).

Source:

*European Commission: Eurybase – Organisation of the Education System in the Netherlands 2008/09.*

*[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/NL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/NL_EN.pdf)*

*University of Amsterdam (2010): Quality Assurance at the University of Amsterdam.*



## 3-2) External quality assurance framework

### 3-2-1) Research assessment

Every six years the quality of research institutes and research groups at Dutch research universities is systematically assessed. Universities organise the assessment themselves and appoint an independent international peer-review committee. Next to an overall assessment of an institute, the quality, productivity, viability and relevance of all research groups are evaluated. PhD programmes are also included in this process. In addition to the external evaluation, an internal evaluation of the institutes takes place every three years.

The present research quality assurance system has been in use since the 1990s. Up until 2003, the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands) had been responsible for organising nation-wide evaluations on discipline level. Since 2003 the universities themselves have organised the research assessments based on the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP). In this protocol, established by the VSNU, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the three main Dutch organisations responsible for publicly funded research, emphasis is placed on the international position of institutes and research groups. The protocol is periodically reviewed by an independent expert committee.

The external evaluation of scientific research applies at two levels: the research institute as a whole and its research programmes. Three main tasks of the research institute and its research programmes are to be assessed: the production of results relevant to the scientific community, the production of results relevant to society, and the training of PhD students.

#### Objectives of research assessment

The Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) provides common guidelines for the evaluation and improvement of research and research policy, based on expert assessment. It has two main objectives:

- To improve the research quality based on external peer review, including scientific and societal relevance of research, research policy and research management;
- To ensure accountability to the board of the research organisation, and towards funding agencies, government and society at large.

#### Assessment criteria

The main criteria to be used in the evaluation are:

- Quality (including international academic reputation and PhD training)
- Productivity (the relationship between reputation and output)
- Societal relevance (scientific and socio-economic impact)
- Vitality and feasibility (the ability to react adequately to important changes in the environment).

## Planning and procedures

1. Overall planning
2. Providing planning document
3. Selection and composition of the external evaluation committee
4. Self-evaluation
5. Site visit and evaluation report
6. Follow-up

Source:

*VSNU, KNAW and NWO (2009): Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015, Protocol for Research Assessment in the Netherlands.*

*VSNU website: <http://www.vsnv.nl/Home-english.htm>*

*KNAW website: <http://www.knav.nl/english/>*

### 3-2-2) Accreditation

Since the 1990s, Dutch universities have had an external check on the quality of teaching in the form of quality assessments. Over a five-year cycle all university programmes in the Netherlands were scrutinised by committee installed by VSNU, which assessed the quality of the programmes and presents its findings in a public assessment report. When the bachelor/master system was introduced in 2002, the national quality assurance system has been modified from these assessments to accreditation. A special organisation has been set up to award accreditations, the NVAO (the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders).

The system of accreditation in higher education aims to guarantee that study programmes meet the highest standards. Accreditation procedures have become an important method for external quality assurance not only in the Netherlands but in many other European countries. Accreditation is defined as every formalised decision by an appropriately recognised authority as to whether an institution of higher education or a programme conforms to certain standards. According to European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), accreditation is defined as “a formal and independent decision, indicating that an institution of higher education and/or programmes meet certain predefined standards.”

Accreditation is achieved through a multi-step process:

1. self-evaluation or documentation submitted by the unit undergoing accreditation;
2. external assessment by independent experts; and,
3. the accreditation decision.

The accreditation decision is based on the external assessment. The accreditation decision itself is authoritative in nature and results in a “yes” (with or without conditions) or “no” judgment with a limited validity.

In the Netherlands, the law, Higher Education and Accreditation Act 2002, requires that all degree programmes offered by research universities and universities of applied sciences be evaluated against a specific set of criteria. Programmes that meet the criteria are accredited (i.e. officially

recognised). Degree programmes accredited by NVAO will be listed in the Central Register of Higher Education Programmes (CROHO). Students will be awarded recognised degrees only after completing an accredited degree programme.

The current Dutch accreditation system is comprised of 1) initial accreditation (assessment of 'new' programmes that want to offer a recognised bachelor and master's degree) and 2) cyclical accreditation (assessment of programmes with all bachelor and master's degrees that are already recognised). Accreditation is mandatory for programmes to award recognised bachelor and master degrees; to make their students eligible for study grants and loans; to receive state funding (for public higher education institutions only). Below are an outline of cyclical accreditation system carried out by NVAO (please refer to page 57 for the summary of NVAO's initial accreditation).

### Double-layered accreditation system

In the Netherlands and Flanders, assessment and accreditation of new programmes is carried out by NVAO (initial accreditation).

In the Netherlands and Flanders, accreditation of existing programmes is double layered, implemented by VBIs and NVAO. VBIs refer to 'quality assessment agencies'. VBI is an organisation recognised by NVAO as a quality assessment agency. There are 7 VBIs in the Netherlands and 2 in Flanders. Based on a critical self-analysis and internal evaluation by the programmes, VBI undertakes external assessment (a site visit by an expert-team of at least 4 persons, amongst which always is a student) and prepares an assessment report. NVAO carries out accreditation and decides whether a programme can be accredited, based on the data supplied by a quality assessment agency. If the quality assessment agency gives an unfavourable verdict on one or more accreditation criteria, the NVAO does not award accreditation, and this has direct consequences for the continued existence of programmes. Also if the report of the agency is positive NVAO has the legal obligation to make an independent accreditation decision. In some cases this led to additional questions by NVAO or a verification committee installed by NVAO to re-assess the programme on certain standards or criteria. In some cases the report of the agency has been rejected by NVAO because it did not follow NVAO's rules regarding the composition of the panel or the report was not methodologically sound.

In the Netherlands, the legislative opted for a free market of quality assessment agencies. NVAO has been given the legal task to annually draw up a list of quality assessment agencies that are considered capable of producing assessment reports that meet NVAO requirements. To be eligible for inclusion on the list, quality assessment agencies annually submit a programme dossier to NVAO in which they point out how they meet the requirements of the 'Protocol for Quality Assessment Agencies' in order to be inserted on the list. Departure points are: the quality assessment agency should be an independent organisation, its assessment panels should be of good quality and its assessment reports should enable NVAO to make independent judgements whether an assessed programmes offer sufficient generic quality.

In addition, in accordance with the system implemented by NVAO, quality assessment agencies

should undergo an audit every two years. The audits select and examine applications on a random basis and they examine the organisational aspects of the quality assessment agencies.

#### **NVAO-accredited quality assessment agencies (the Netherlands)**

- QANU: Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities
- Certiked VBI bv: Lloyd's Register Nederland B.V.
- EAPAA: European Association for Public Administration Accreditation
- Hobéon: Hobéon Certificering bv
- NQA: Netherlands Quality Agency
- ASIIN: Akkreditierungsagentur für Studiengänge der Ingenieurwissenschaften, der Informatik, der Naturwissenschaften und der Mathematik e.V. (NVAO-accredited agency based in Germany)
- FIBAA: Internationale Agentur zur Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung von Studiengängen und Institutionen; Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (NVAO-accredited agency based in Germany)

#### **NVAO-accredited quality assessment agencies (Flanders)**

- VLIR: Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (Flemish Interuniversity Council)
- VLHORA: Vlaamse Hogescholenraad (Flemish College Council)

Each quality assessment agency has a different approach to quality assessment stemming from their origin. The approach applied by NQA and QANU (which have their origin in the umbrella organisations of the universities of professional education and research universities, respectively) has developed from a content-oriented 'peer review' system. The approach of Hobéon and Certiked (originally certification agencies and/or consultancy agencies) is more focused on a process-based audit. Institutions can choose the quality assessment agency that applies the working method that best accords with their vision for their programme. Whichever approach is used, NVAO ensures that sufficient attention is given to the content and the achieved learning outcomes of the programmes in its decision-making process.

#### **Accreditation cycle**

The accreditation cycle is as follows:

1. Thirty-six months before the accreditation expires the institution offering the programme selects a quality assessment agency (VBI), with which it enters into a formal agreement on how the assessment is to be carried out.
2. During the next twelve months the department being assessed carries out an internal evaluation and sets out the findings in an internal evaluation report. Meanwhile the VBI appoints an assessment committee with the appropriate expertise.
3. Based on the internal evaluation and a visit to the department, the assessment committee produces an assessment and reports its findings to the department and the institution.
4. The institution offering the programme has to submit this report along with its application for reaccreditation at least one year before the current accreditation expires.

5. Before the current accreditation expires the NVAO indicates whether it accepts the findings of the VBI and intends to reaccredit the programme.

### The assessment of the programme

In order for the quality assessment agency to give a positive final assessment, each theme must be marked satisfactory. A positive accreditation decision can only be based on positive judgements of the themes in the assessment framework. The assessment of a theme in the assessment framework is done on the basis of the assessments of the separate standards of that theme. The assessment report has to make clear how the assessment of the different standards led to the conclusion concerning that theme. In other words, the panel has to clarify how the assessment of a theme is based on the assessments of the underlying standards. In its accreditation decision NVAO will make clear how its decision is based on the findings of the panel, on an analysis of these findings and on the assessment of the programme based on this accreditation framework. In order to arrive at a positive accreditation decision concerning a programme, it must be demonstrated in the assessment that quality is ensured for each of the modes of study (fulltime, part-time and/or work-based), based on the criteria laid out in this assessment framework.

If a proposed programme is to be provided at various locations under one denomination in the Government's Central Register (CROHO), the accreditation can only have a positive result if the assessment shows that each location will meet the criteria for quality listed in this accreditation framework.

### Focus on learning outcomes

Education in the Netherlands and Flanders has been developing towards a competence-based education system since the beginning of the 1990s. The focus of education has moved from the teaching process to the learning process. Before this development, education used to be seen as an input-based process expressed in workload and length of studies (hours, semesters and years).

In a competence-based system, education is seen as an output-based process expressed in the competences achieved by the learner. As a result, the degrees awarded in higher education are no longer seen as proof of participation and successful completion of a programme but as the recognition of having achieved certain predefined learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes are therefore the crux of NVAO's learning outcomes-oriented accreditation system. The overarching qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area has defined the generic learning outcomes of programmes at different levels, the so-called Dublin descriptors\*. These are essential to identify the level of a programme, e.g. bachelor or master's level. Next to these, subject-specific learning outcomes are defined. These are essential to identify the subject of the programme, such as engineering or social work.

In the NVAO's accreditation system, learning outcomes are made use of at three levels.

A programme is expected to explicitly define its *intended learning outcomes*. These are the

competences a graduate should acquire during his studies. An assessment panel first judges whether a programme's intended learning outcomes are in line with the required level and the subject of the programme. The level is evaluated by matching the intended learning outcomes to the Dublin descriptors. Additionally, the assessment panel assesses whether these intended learning outcomes are in line with what is (inter)nationally expected of a programme in that subject.

NVAO secondly judges the *potential learning outcomes*. These are the competences a student can achieve in the programme as it is offered. This is mainly done by corresponding the content of the curriculum with the intended learning outcomes. An example probably clarifies this better. If a programme defines laboratory skills as an intended learning outcome, the curriculum of the programme should explicitly cover this and give students the possibility to do laboratory work. If this isn't the case, there is of course no correspondence between the content of the curriculum and the intended learning outcomes.

Certain input elements such as the facilities and the quantity and quality of the staff also contribute to the possible achievement of learning outcomes. These are therefore additionally assessed.

Thirdly, NVAO assesses the *achieved learning outcomes*. These are the competences a graduate has actually acquired during his or her studies. An assessment panel needs to read the students' work (such as essays, end of term papers and theses) to be able to judge the achieved learning outcomes and then match those with the required learning outcomes. The required learning outcomes are of course the level-specific and intended subject-specific learning outcomes as defined by the programme and (positively) assessed by the panel.

Additionally, NVAO judges the internal quality assurance system. When a programme is deemed to have the required generic quality, it receives accreditation for several years. A well-functioning internal quality assurance system should then ensure that a programme retains its quality during that period.

By combining intended, potential and achieved learning outcomes, NVAO intends to assess whether a programme delivers what it promises to deliver (to students and the rest of the society).

\* The Dublin descriptors: The Dublin descriptors are the general statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with awards. They have been developed by an international group of experts, which has named itself the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) following its meeting which took place in Dublin in March 2004. General level descriptors have been developed for the first (bachelor), second (master) and third (doctoral) cycle. The descriptors consist of a set of criteria, phased in terms of competence levels, which enables to distinguish in a broad and general manner between the different cycles. The following five sets of criteria are distinguished: Acquiring knowledge and understanding; Applying knowledge and understanding; Making informed judgements and choices; Communicating knowledge and understanding; Capacities to continue learning.

## Assessment criteria

The standards used in accreditation procedures are organised into six themes.

1. Aims and objectives of programme
2. Curriculum
3. Staff and personnel policy
4. Services
5. Internal quality assurance
6. Results (achieved learning outcomes and study progress)

## Assessment rules

The assessment agency uses the four scales ('excellent', 'good', 'satisfactory', 'unsatisfactory') for their assessment of standards listed in the assessment framework.

## The accreditation procedure

NVAO's accreditation procedure consists of three consecutive steps: the self-evaluation, the external assessment and the accreditation.

### **1. Self-evaluation**

The first step in the accreditation procedure is the self-evaluation. The institution and/or the programme is responsible for carrying out a self-evaluation of the programme(s) concerned. This process is concluded with a self-evaluation report. The self-evaluation report contains a description and evaluation of the programme. The institution sends the self-evaluation report to a quality assessment agency.

### **2. External assessment**

The second step in the accreditation procedure is the external assessment by a quality assessment agency. At the request of an institution, a quality assessment agency organises an external assessment. An assessment panel is responsible for the external assessment of the programme. The composition of the assessment panel should be in line with NVAO requirements.

The assessment panel assesses the quality of the self-evaluation (including the methodology used to realise it) and whether the programme fulfils the criteria of the NVAO's assessment framework. The external assessment focuses on learning outcomes. The panel writes down their findings, considerations and conclusions in their assessment report.

### **3. Accreditation**

The third step in the accreditation framework is accreditation itself. NVAO evaluates the assessment report, the overall conclusions expressed in it, the panel composition and the methodology used. The institution submits an application to NVAO for accreditation of the programme. This application has to provide the following details of the programme:

- Level (bachelor or master's level)
- Orientation (professional or academic orientation)
- Mode of study (fulltime, part-time and/or work-based)

- Undergraduate or postgraduate
- Locations where the programme is offered.

The assessment report is attached to this application. This report must be of a recent enough date: the assessment must refer to the situation of no more than one year before the date of application.

NVAO assesses the report and its overall assessment, and checks whether it is compatible with the accreditation framework. In some cases NVAO may request additional information. NVAO's decision about granting accreditation is made available within three months. The institution is notified in writing about the intended decision first, and it is given the opportunity to react within a period of two weeks within the three months' period during which NVAO must take its decision.

Subsequently, NVAO takes an accreditation decision and lays down its findings in an accreditation report. If the programme meets the criteria listed in the accreditation framework, it is accredited for a period of six (the Netherlands) or eight (Flanders) years. If NVAO considers the information given in the assessment report insufficient to make a decision, the decision may be postponed. In such cases the existing accreditation of the programme will remain in place until NVAO has taken its decision. The institution has the legal right to lodge an appeal against NVAO's decision.

Finally, the panel's assessment report and NVAO's accreditation report (including the accreditation decision) are published by NVAO.

### Temporary recognition

In Flanders, after a negative accreditation decision, the institution can submit an application to the Flemish government for a temporary recognition. This has to be done within one month after the notification of the negative decision. A detailed plan for improvement shall be put forward together with the application. Following advice from the Recognition Commission, the Flemish government takes a decision within three months of the application. Temporary recognition may have a validity of one to three years. In the Netherlands, there is also a possibility for an improvement period. This is seen as a recovery period. This period lasts two years.

Source:

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO): Reforming Quality Assurance and Accreditation in the Netherlands (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*NVAO (2003): Accreditation Framework - The Netherlands*

*NVAO website: <http://www.nvao.net/>*

*Ineke Ganzeveld (State University of Groningen): Quality assurance at the State University of Groningen, 2009.*

*State University of Groningen (2005): Integrated Quality Assurance for Education at the State University of Groningen.*

*Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/>*

*Qrossroads website: <http://www.qrossroads.eu/about-qrossroads>*



### 3-3) Quality assurance and internationalisation

Quality assurance is steadily growing in importance in the field of internationalisation. There is currently a widespread belief that internationalisation should not be regarded as a goal in itself, but rather as a means to improve the quality of education.

Many national and institutional policy documents set down quality as one of the major goals of internationalisation. At the same time, there is a definite lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of internationalisation on quality. Hence, there is only limited proof of any direct connection between internationalisation and the quality of education.

Quality assurance and internationalisation are actually two very different things. The former is concerned with the quality assurance of internationalisation, while the latter focuses on the internationalisation of quality assurance and elements of international programmes. In the latter case, centre stage is occupied by quality assurance itself and it is looked at within the international context.

#### 3-3-1) National Qualifications Framework

##### Transparency in European higher education

Higher education of an outstanding quality constitutes the basis of a knowledge society. The international mobility of students and teachers is an essential component in this. Over the past ten years, the education ministers of, currently, 46 European countries have made numerous agreements on the development of a system of internationally comparable qualifications to make higher education systems more transparent and to bring them into better harmony with one another.

With the signing of the Bologna declaration in 1999, the education ministers laid the foundations for the establishment of the European Higher Education Area. Every country observes a comparable structure of qualifications uses the same credits system (ECTS) and awards graduates a Diploma Supplement in accordance with a European model.

##### The role of qualifications frameworks

For the mutual recognition of qualifications, modular certificates and credits, proper comparability of the higher education systems of the different countries is essential. Each country participating in the Bologna process is therefore developing a national qualifications framework that is aligned with the overarching European framework, the European Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. The starting point is that the level of the programmes meets the generic competencies requirements as agreed for bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and PhDs (the three cycles of higher education). These generic competencies are written down in the Dublin descriptors. When programmes are accredited, an investigation is conducted into whether or not the required level is being met.

## The Dutch Qualifications Framework

The Netherlands has also developed a national qualifications framework. This Dutch Qualifications Framework (NQF) describes the structure of the higher education system in the country. It indicates what prior education is required of students entering higher education, what types of higher education there are, how long the programmes at the various levels take to complete and how students can transfer to higher levels.

### Summary of Dutch National Qualifications Framework

Admission from	First cycle		Second cycle Level 7	Third cycle Level 8	
	Level 5	Level 6			
MBO/HAVO/VWO*	Associate degree 120 ECTS	Bachelor's degree 240 ECTS professionally oriented	Master's degree 60-120 ECTS	Design engineer (standard: 2 years)	Doctorate (standard: 4 years)
VWO	180 ECTS academically oriented		180 ECTS 240 ECTS	Medical specialist (standard: 3-6 years)	

\* MBO: Senior secondary vocational education and training

HAVO: Senior general secondary education

VWO: University preparatory education

Source:

*Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science:*

<http://english.minocw.nl/documenten/OCW-NVAO%20Folder%20ENG%20def.pdf>

*European Commission, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2008): Tuning – Universities' Contribution to the Bologna Process: An Introduction (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).*

### 3-3-2) Code of Conduct

On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2006, the Code of Conduct with respect to international students in Dutch higher education came into effect. This Code sets out standards for Dutch higher education institutions in their dealings with international students. By signing the Code of Conduct, the institutions are offering international students a guarantee of the quality of their programmes, student recruitment, selection and counselling procedures. Only institutions that have signed up to the Code are allowed to recruit international students. This Code of Conduct is an initiative of the Dutch institutions.

#### Providing information to international students

The Code of Conduct requires educational institutions to provide timely, reliable and easily accessible information to international students about their study programmes. Specifically, this includes information such as accreditation status, quality, admission requirements as well as many more important rules and procedures for international students.

The information provided by the educational institutions to international students on the basis of

the Code of Conduct must be in English, in the language used for the study programme, or in the native language of the international student. The educational institution must make clear what services it provides to international students, such as help with obtaining a visa and a residence permit, housing, introduction sessions and student counselling. In their information materials, educational institutions must specify clearly what the associated costs for the services are.

Students from outside the EU seeking a course at an institution of higher education that has not signed the Code of Conduct will not be able to obtain visas.

The full version of the Code of Conduct can be found on the Nuffic website, [Internationalstudy.nl](http://www.nuffic.nl) (English). This website provides a list of the institutions that have signed the Code and also provides information on what to do if you feel that your institution is not meeting the terms of the Code of Conduct.

*Source: Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/home>*

### 3-3-3) Recognition of foreign qualifications

Every country in Europe can be considered a qualifications area. This means that qualifications (also referred to as diplomas) from institutions and/or programmes recognised by the competent (national) authorities are automatically nationally recognised. In contrast, foreign qualifications, i.e. qualifications from outside, are not automatically accepted. These foreign qualifications have to be recognised.

Recognition might for example be required when students have studied in country X and want to work in country Y. This procedure is called the credential evaluation in order to recognise a foreign qualification. It is used to check if a foreign qualification can be accepted into the national qualifications area.

The recognition of foreign qualifications is the responsibility of the recognition bodies. Every European country has at least one these bodies. Most commonly we refer to these bodies as ENIC/NARICs: a combination of European Network of Information Centre (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC).

#### Academic versus professional recognition

There are two types of "international" recognition of qualifications: academic recognition and professional recognition.

Academic recognition refers to recognition decisions that either

- allow a person to pursue or continue higher education; or
- confer the right to use a national title or degree (e.g. PhD) from the host country on the basis of a title or degree acquired in the country of origin.

Professional recognition relates to the methodologies and procedures for evaluating credentials for work purposes and is a more intricate matter.

The system of professional qualifications reflects both the national system of education and the

organisation of professions, industries and professionals themselves. In some countries, such as Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, most academic qualifications also serve as professional qualifications without additional requirements. In other countries, like the UK, professional qualifications are usually acquired upon completion of specific professional training that takes place outside and after university.

Academic recognition and professional recognition have different objectives and require different approaches and instruments. They do however share a methodology for evaluating the educational component of the credential or qualification.

### Credential evaluation methodology

From the early 1950s to the mid-1970s the purpose of credential evaluation was to establish *equivalence*. Qualifications were evaluated on a course-by-course basis and every component of the foreign programme had to be matched with every component in the receiving country's programme.

In the 1980s many countries replaced the concept of equivalence by that of *recognition*: the recognition of a qualification or a diploma for a specific purpose. In this sense, recognition means that a qualification which is not completely equivalent is recognised for a certain purpose (e.g. entry to a doctoral programme) if it fits that purpose. The idea was that a foreign qualification did not have to be identical or even alike in order to be recognised. The foreign degree just needed to have a comparable level and a comparable function and status.

In the 1990s, the concept of *acceptance* has gained ground among most ENIC/NARICs that have long been familiar with recognition. Acceptance means that a foreign qualification of which the level, content and/or function are not recognisably similar to the nearest comparable degree in the receiving country, will be accepted at that level even if there are slight differences. The principle is acceptance with respect for the differences. Only when the differences are too substantial recognition is denied. And although the debate concerning the precise meaning of the term 'substantial differences' will always be a lively one, this was a big leap forward.

## Nuffic

The body responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications regarding secondary and higher education in the Netherlands is Nuffic (Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education). Nuffic is a private body and independently organised. Nuffic's Communication Directorate, International Recognition Department works as Dutch ENIC/NARIC.

Nuffic has the following types of recognition regarding the following qualifications and types of recognition:

Types of qualification	Types of recognition
School-leaving certificate Short cycle education (e.g. Associate degree) First cycle education (e.g. Bachelor) Second cycle education (e.g. Master)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• informative and advisory academic recognition giving access to higher education programmes</li><li>• informative and advisory academic recognition for the use of an academic title</li><li>• informative and advisory recognition giving access to the labour market</li><li>• informative and advisory professional recognition in line with EU directives</li><li>• informative and advisory professional recognition</li></ul>
Third cycle education (e.g. Doctor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• advisory academic recognition for the use of an academic title</li><li>• informative and advisory recognition giving access to the labour market</li><li>• informative and advisory professional recognition</li></ul>

The body responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications concerning senior secondary vocational education and adult education is Colo (Association of Centres of Expertise on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market). There are 18 centres of expertise representing the various industrial sectors and Colo is their united voice. For details about recognition of vocational and training qualifications, please refer to the following website: <http://www.colo.nl/> (English and Dutch)

## The recognition procedure(s)

A fee of 111 Euro is charged for the Nuffic's recognition procedure. A fee is not charged for higher education institutions and government agencies.

### **Step 1: Application**

- All holders of foreign qualifications have access to an assessment of their qualifications
- Informal advice is available about the possibilities and procedures taking into account the competence of the recognition authority
- Applicants fill in standardised application forms
- The receipt of the application is acknowledged
- Check whether there are any bilateral/international agreements applicable
- The time normally required to process recognition applications is specified to the applicants

### **Step 2: Verification**

- A checklist is used regarding required documents
- The authenticity of the documents is verified
- Previous cases (i.e. precedents) are referred to in light of the current recognition decisions
- The status, type and accreditation of the awarding higher education institution and the programme leading to the qualification is verified
- The recognition networks/bodies (e.g. ENIC/NARICs) are consulted

### **Step 3: Assessment**

- By checking certain predefined criteria differences are detected
- Detected differences are checked to see whether they are considered substantial taking into account the purpose for which recognition is sought

### **Step 4: Decision-making**

- If there are no substantial differences: full recognition
- In case there are substantial differences:
  - All the reasons why the differences are substantial will be clearly stated
  - An alternative or partial recognition is suggested
  - Information is given on possibilities for appeal
- The decision is added to an Inventory of typical recognition cases

In 2009, Nuffic worked on six international projects on improving recognition in the Netherlands and Europe. Competencies in education and Recognition (CoRe2) is a two-year project of the European Commission which aims to draw up practical and clear instructions on describing the education results of higher education programmes. These play an important role in recognition if written consistently and transparently. Nuffic has produced the first version of a manual for drawing up meaningful degree profiles.

### **Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR)**

People with qualifications may have more knowledge and skills than their diplomas show. For example, they will most likely have acquired additional competencies through work experience and informal learning. This experience may be important for the career that they wish to follow in another country. Nuffic wants to encourage the recognition of this prior learning, and has therefore developed an assessment method for this purpose.

Nuffic designs portfolio instruments to order. When Nuffic is asked to design a portfolio, it makes one that matches the client's objectives. Nuffic does this for anyone who, directly or indirectly, is involved in getting people with foreign qualifications into work or study.

Using a portfolio format, highly skilled migrants are able to provide a clear description of their prior learning. Organisations that deal with people with foreign qualifications are then able to get a more complete picture of a person's competencies. A university, for example, is better equipped to judge the right point of entry for a student, and a company looking to recruit a foreign employee can see

whether the candidate's skills match the company's requirements.

*Source:*

*Nuffic: Knowledge without borders – Credential evaluation and Recognition.*

*Nuffic (2010): Annual Overview 2009.*

*Grossroads website: <http://www.grossroads.eu/about-grossroads>*

#### **4. Specific legislative framework**

- The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) 1993 (amended 2002)
- The Higher Education and Accreditation Act 2002
- The Education Inspection Act (WOT) 2002

#### **5. New issues about quality assurance**

##### **5-1) Ranking and classification**

When Dutch students decide on where they want to study, they do not think in terms of 'the best institution'. Instead, they look for any particular features that may distinguish one research university or university of applied sciences from another, such as specialisation or academic tradition. In Netherlands, there is no official university ranking system, however, an issue which has received more attention is the development of a classification system of institutional types and profiles and a ranking system in terms of performance of institutions.

These topics provoke much discussion and resistance, particularly the ranking of performances which may reinforce the role of the prestige of institutions. There is a general belief that if rankings are unavoidable this should be done well and based on the purpose it should serve, namely for adequate information for stakeholders. It is said that their main purpose is to inform students and prospective students as part of the study information systems. Particularly for those candidates abroad with limited access to information such a system could be very helpful. The general view is that such ranking should be multidimensional, and should avoid a situation where institutions are ranked as a whole. Ranking should pay attention to both teaching and research, performance, based on objective criteria and have an international scope.

Currently the Ministry supports a project by Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) which explores the possibility of applying the ranking system as developed by the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE) to Dutch higher education. With this initiative the Netherlands follows Austria and Switzerland, thereby contributing to a European initiative on ranking.

Examples of current rankings related to higher education:

- Times Higher Education World University Rankings (UK) – World university rankings:  
<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/> (English)

- Shanghai Jiao Tong University, the Academic Ranking of World Universities (China) - World university rankings: <http://www.arwu.org/aboutARWU.jsp> (English and Chinese)
- The Leiden Ranking, Leiden University's Centre for Science and Technology Studies (the Netherlands) - Comparison of research institutions in Europe and around the world with impact measures:  
<http://www.socialsciences.leiden.edu/cwts/products-services/leiden-ranking-2010-cwts.html#introduction> (English)
- Elsevier Thema Studeren (the Netherlands) - University programmes rated by Dutch students and academics (professors and senior lecturers):  
<http://www.elsevier.nl/web/Weekblad/Onderzoeken/De-beste-studies-2010-1.htm> (Dutch)

## 5-2) New accreditation system

The current Dutch-Flemish accreditation system is robust, has a strong political legitimacy and is internationally seen as tough. However, it also has some serious disadvantages: it is time-consuming, leads to fear and this causes an overload of less relevant information, has a tendency to be directed more to procedures and processes instead of the content, and alienates the teachers. Besides that, the information laid down in the experts' report and the NVAO decisions are formal and difficult to read.

That is the reason for a change in the system, which will start in January 2011. The new system will consist of two parts: an institutional audit, in which the internal quality assurance system of the higher education institutions will be checked and evaluated, and a programme accreditation, in which the "ambition and objectives" (the intended learning outcomes), the "content and the results" (the achieved learning outcomes) are evaluated by peers.

The main aim of new accreditation system is to diminish the "accreditation burden", provide better and more adequate information for students and the labour market, balance accountability and enhancement by introducing an institutional audit, and commit professional and increase academic ownership by introducing the limited programme assessment which focuses on content, not on procedures and assesses learning outcomes, not quantitative elements.



## Overview of the new accreditation system

### 1. Institutional audit

Focus	Focus on the functioning of the internal quality assurance system of higher education institutions with respect to teaching and learning.
Standards	<p><b>Standard 1: Vision of the quality of the education provided</b>  - The institution has a broad vision of the quality of the education it provides and of the development of a quality culture.</p> <p><b>Standard 2: Policy</b>  - The institution has an appropriate policy for the realisation of its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides. This will at least include: policy regarding teaching, staff, facilities, the anchoring of research in the education provided as well as the inter-relationship between the education provided and the (international) occupational field and the discipline.</p> <p><b>Standard 3: Results</b>  - The institution has insight into the degree to which its vision regarding the quality of the education it provides is being realised and it regularly measures and monitors the quality of its programmes by gauging the views of students, staff, alumni and representatives from the occupational field.</p> <p><b>Standard 4: Improvement policy</b>  - The institution can demonstrate that it systematically improves the quality of its programmes when necessary.</p> <p><b>Standard 5: Organisation and decision-making structure</b>  - The institution has an effective organisation and decision-making structure regarding the quality of its programmes, in which duties, authorities and responsibilities are clearly delineated and of which the input of students and staff constitutes a part.</p>
Decision	General decision is made either <i>positive</i> , <i>negative</i> , or <i>conditionally positive</i> .

## 2. Programme assessment

<b>Limited programme assessment, when the institutional audit is positive</b>	<b>Comprehensive programme assessment, when the institutional audit is negative</b>
Assessment of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content of the programme</li> <li>• focus on performance</li> </ul>	Detailed assessment of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content</li> <li>• policy</li> <li>• procedures</li> </ul>
3 standards <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intended learning outcomes</li> <li>2. Programme and staff quality</li> <li>3. Achieved learning outcomes and Learning assessment</li> </ol>	16 standards divided in 6 themes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Intended learning outcomes</li> <li>2. Programme</li> <li>3. Staff</li> <li>4. Services</li> <li>5. Quality assurance system</li> <li>6. Achieved learning outcomes and Learning assessment</li> </ol>
Decision: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent quality	

Source:

*Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) (2007): Higher Education in the Netherlands: Country report.*

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO): Reforming Quality Assurance and Accreditation in the Netherlands (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*Times Higher Education website: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/>*

*Shanghai Jiao Tong University, the Academic Ranking of World Universities website:*

*<http://www.arwu.org/aboutARWU.jsp>*

*Centre for Higher Education Development website: <http://www.che.de/cms/?getObject=302&getLang=en>*

*Elsevier Thema website: <http://www.elsevier.nl/web/Weekblad/Onderzoeken/De-beste-studies-2009.htm>*

*Leiden University website: <http://www.leiden.edu/>*

## IV. An introduction to quality assurance and international cooperation organisations

### 1. Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

#### 1-1) Overview of the organisation

Name of the organisation	NVAO (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie) [Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders]
Character of the organisation	NVAO was set up in the framework of the Bologna Process and established by international treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders as an independent quality assurance agency. NVAO is independent in procedures, methodologies and decision-making.
Year of establishment	2003 (formally established in 2005 when all legal formalities regarding the establishment of NVAO had been concluded)
Location	Parkstraat 28, 2514 JK The Hague, The Netherlands
Representative	Dr. Karl Dittrich, Chairman
Finance	NVAO has an annual budget of 5.6 million Euro. The Dutch and Flemish governments fund the NVAO with a 60 % - 40 % distribution. The government allocations do not fully cover the costs of accreditations. Institutions also need to contribute. The NVAO charges a maximum of 10,000 Euro per request for initial accreditations (new programmes) and 500 Euro for accreditation requests (existing programmes).
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory Council (12)</li> <li>• Board (11)</li> <li>• Executive Board (4)</li> <li>• Managing director (1)</li> <li>• International Affairs (4)</li> <li>• Policy Advisors (General and International) (23)</li> <li>• Staff services (Legal affairs, Public relations, Finances and personnel) (7)</li> <li>• Support services (14)</li> </ul>

Source:

NVAO website: <http://www.nvao.net/>

INQAAHE website: <http://www.inqaahe.org/>

Axel Aerden (NVAO) (2009): *General introduction to accreditation in the Netherlands and Flanders.*

Karl Dittrich (NVAO): *Reforming Quality Assurance and Accreditation in the Netherlands (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

## 1-2) Mission and role

### Mission

NVAO independently ensures the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders by assessing and accrediting programmes and contributes to enhancing this quality. In addition, NVAO contributes to the increase of quality awareness within higher education and improving the position of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders in the national and international context.

### NVAO's role in higher education

NVAO wishes to be a proactive partner in higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders. The organisation also intends to fulfil a pioneering role in the development of quality assurance and accreditation in Europe.

In both the Netherlands and Flanders, NVAO engages in intensive consultation with institutions of higher education, experts, umbrella and professional organisations, students, employer's organisations and labour unions. NVAO endeavours to be proactive, to engage in dialogue with institutions, students and the labour market. Together with other accreditation organisations, NVAO verifies to what extent their policies are based on the same approach and procedures as those laid down in the Dutch and Flemish accreditation frameworks.

*Source: NVAO website: <http://www.nvao.net/>*

## 1-3) The legal framework

### Treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders

In 2000, the Netherlands and Flanders expressed the intention to establish a joint accreditation organisation. This organisation would be charged with the accreditation of higher education programmes in both the Netherlands and Flanders. Both parties were endeavouring to implement the Bologna declaration and deemed a well-functioning and internationally acceptable accreditation system a precondition for furthering international comparability of higher education programmes. Accreditation would be the keystone of the already existing external review system.

In 2001, tentative talks took place between the competent Dutch and Flemish ministers about the establishment of an international accreditation organisation. In April 2003, the then Dutch and Flemish Education ministers initiated talks on the content of what was to become the Treaty by which NVAO would be established as a bi-national organisation. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2003, the Treaty for the establishment of a bi-national accreditation organisation was signed by the competent ministers of the Netherlands and Flanders. Hence, the NVAO (in formation) was a fact. The Treaty assigns the tasks of NVAO, its form of administration and its supervision. On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005, all legal formalities regarding the establishment of NVAO had been concluded and NVAO was formally established.

*Source: NVAO website: <http://www.nvao.net/>*

## 1-4) Main area of activity

### 1-4-1) Initial accreditation

The starting point for initial accreditation is the initial accreditation framework. The required procedure, the quality standards and the assessment rules are laid down in this framework. Initial accreditation concerns proposals for new programmes. Programmes are considered new programmes if they are not registered in the official register of the relevant country (i.e. the CROHO in the Netherlands or the Higher Education Register in Flanders). Initial accreditation relates to the assessment of the potential quality of the programme including, when possible, a focus on achieved quality. Since a positive initial accreditation decision leads to the inclusion of the programme in the official register (either CROHO or Higher Education Register), initial accreditation is considered the gatekeeper to the regular accreditation system. The initial accreditation procedure consists of three consecutive steps: the programme proposal, the external assessment and the initial accreditation.

#### Programme proposal

The first step in the initial accreditation procedure is the programme proposals. The institution is responsible for the proposal and therefore assembles a collection of documents regarding the proposed programme. The programme proposal contains a full description of the programme. This is done according to at least the themes, the standards and the criteria of the relevant initial accreditation framework. In addition, the proposal indicates and substantiates the level and orientation of the programme. The institution submits an application for accreditation of a programme to NVAO by sending in the programme proposal.

#### External assessment

The second step in the initial accreditation procedure is the external assessment. NVAO convenes an assessment panel that will be responsible for the external assessment of the programme. The assessment panel assesses the potential quality of the proposed programme and whether the programme fulfils the criteria of the initial accreditation framework. The panel follows the assessment framework (which contains all the standards) and the assessment rules as laid down in the initial accreditation framework. The external assessment focuses on learning outcomes. The panel writes down their (objective) findings, (subjective) considerations and conclusions in their assessment report. The report contains an explicit proposal to NVAO to take either a positive or a negative initial accreditation decision.

#### Initial accreditation

The third step in the initial accreditation procedure is initial accreditation itself. NVAO evaluates the assessment report and the overall conclusions expressed in it. This means that NVAO verifies whether the programme has the potential to offer generic quality. Subsequently, NVAO takes an initial accreditation decision and lays down its findings in an initial accreditation report. Finally, the panel's assessment report and NVAO's initial accreditation report (including the initial accreditation

decision) are published by NVAO.

If the initial accreditation decision is positive, the programme is initially accredited. This means that the programme is included in the relevant official register (i.e. CROHO or Higher Education Register). This registration means that the degree awarded by the programme is recognised by the national authorities. In addition, initially accredited programmes can receive public funding (but only when granted a positive macro-efficiency check) and the students enrolled in these programmes can receive study finance (e.g. grants). However, public funding and study finance are normally not available for programmes offered by private institutions. If the initial accreditation decision is negative, it will not be possible to offer the programme.

#### 1-4-2) Accreditation

The replacement of the traditional system of university degrees in the Netherlands and Flanders by one based on bachelor's and master's degrees such as are common in the Anglo-Saxon educational world has led to the setting up of an accreditation system allowing degree programmes to be checked for compliance with certain quality criteria. Accreditation is a precondition for government funding of a degree programme, for the right to issue officially recognised degree certificates and for the approval of grants or loans to students following the programme.

A degree programme is granted accreditation by the NVAO on the basis of a report produced by an external assessment panel acting under the authority of a quality assessment agency (VBI) such as QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities) and involving on-the-spot inspection of the programme under review. VBI is an organisation accredited by NVAO as a recognised quality assessment agency. There are 7 VBIs in the Netherlands and 2 in Flanders (please refer to page 40 for the names of NVAO-accredited quality assessment agencies). Based on a critical self-analysis and internal evaluation by the programmes, VBI undertakes external assessment (a site visit by an expert-team of at least 4 persons, amongst which always is a student) and prepares an assessment report. NVAO carries out accreditation and makes the final decision on the basis of this report.

Quality assessment agency's staff have years of experience of such assessments, and can offer support for the self-evaluation of a programme which must precede the assessment by the review panel and the writing of the self-evaluation report which must be submitted to the panel. Quality assessment agency can also help a programme in the submission of the application for accreditation.

For details of NVAO's accreditation, please refer to page 38.

### 1-4-3) Additional tasks

Apart from its primary responsibilities (i.e. accreditation), NVAO is charged with some additional tasks. NVAO's most important additional tasks at this moment are the following:

#### (1) Higher Education Register

NVAO has been entrusted the task to publish all the officially recognised higher education institutions and bachelor and master's programmes in Flanders. This is done by managing the Higher Education Register. Through the online development and database administration, NVAO offers the Register both in Dutch and in English.

#### (2) Recognition of private higher education institutions

The Dutch State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science has stipulated the policy regulation concerning recognition of private higher education institutions and has requested NVAO to play a role in the recognition procedure. For this purpose, NVAO has developed the 'Protocol Recognition Procedure' including the criteria that programmes have to meet to be eligible for recognition. Recognition means that, in the Netherlands a higher education institution, with the exception of the right to public funding, enjoys the same rights as a publicly funded institution.

### 1-4-4) Internationalisation

One of the NVAO's objectives concerning its international activities is to pro-actively monitor, influence and implement international developments in quality assurance and higher education. In the past, NVAO participated in the following international activities: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) / Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the European Qualification Framework proposed by the European Commission.

NVAO maintains excellent contacts with the appropriate government officials in the Dutch and Flemish ministries and with the appropriate members of the international network organisations. The current key areas of awareness are the progress of the Bologna Process and the development of the Dutch and Flemish national qualification frameworks. NVAO played a major role in the introduction of the Erasmus Mundus programme by facilitating the assessment of these joint master's programmes and by providing information to the institutions involved in these programmes.

#### (1) International networks

NVAO takes a leading role in international developments in standards and quality, enjoying a close relationship with quality assurance agencies in the European region. Three of these have a European significance: ENQA (the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), ECA (the European Consortium for Accreditation) and EQAR (the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education).

ENQA is the network of European quality assurance agencies from countries partly to the Bologna Process. It was established in 2000 to promote European cooperation in the field of quality assurance. It plays a political role and stimulates cooperation in procedures and methods. NVAO participates in the annual General Assembly and as a rule is always present at ENQA Workshops. In the last few years NVAO has participated in the Transnational European Evaluation Project II (TEEP II).

ECA is membership which consists of 17 accreditation organisations from 11 different European countries. ECA was established in 2003 with the aim to achieve the mutual recognition of accreditation decisions among the participants. As ECA partner institution, NVAO participates in various projects in the field of accreditation carried out by ECA.

EQAR is a list of trustworthy European agencies which perform their activities according to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

## (2) Involvement with international developments in quality assurance

### Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions

Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions is one of NVAO's main objectives. If accreditation decisions taken by NVAO would be automatically recognised by international accreditation organisations and recognition bodies, it would increase mobility of Flemish and Dutch students and alumni. In reverse, it would also make it easier for foreign students and alumni to continue their studies or find a job in the Netherlands and Flanders. Currently, NVAO has mutual recognition agreements with Austrian Accreditation Council (AAC), Austria; Fachhochschulrat (FH Council), Austria; Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI), France; Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen (NOKUT), Norway; the Polish State Accreditation Committee (PKA), Poland; and Organ für Akkreditierung und Qualitätssicherung der Schweizerischen Hochschulen (OAQ), Switzerland.

At present, institutions that offer international programmes are confronted with different accreditation procedures and regulations in the countries involved. These institutions would equally benefit from mutual recognition of accreditation decisions. As mutual recognition of accreditation decisions is one of the major objectives of ECA's member organisations, NVAO invests a lot of its resources in the membership of ECA.

### **Transparent European Accreditation decisions and Mutual recognition agreements (TEAM)**

TEAM was a project conducted by ECA partners in the period from October 2006 till September 2008. TEAM stands for Transparent European Accreditation decisions and Mutual recognition agreements. The project was funded with support from the European Commission, but was coordinated by NVAO. The most important objective of the TEAM project was the development of an online European information tool for students, recognition bodies, higher education institutions and employers in which they can look up which institutions and programmes have been accredited within Europe. 10 European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain and Switzerland) participated in TEAM project.



## Website *Qrossroads*

TEAM projects resulted in website *Qrossroads* ('Q' of 'Quality' and 'Qualifications' is used as the first letter of *Qrossroads*). This site is a source of information for everyone interested in accredited programmes in Europe. The main aim of *Qrossroads* is to present the qualifications awarded by programmes and institutions that were quality assured and accredited. The information on *Qrossroads* is provided by quality assurance and accreditation agencies and specifically concerns qualifications from quality assured and accredited programmes and institutions. *Qrossroads* is aimed at different target groups like students, employers and institutions themselves. The site currently has information on programmes in eight countries: Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Switzerland and the Netherlands (this will be expanded in the years ahead). As one of the partners of *Qrossroads*, NVAO provides information regarding quality-assured institutions and programmes in the Netherlands and Flanders.

## TEAM II

ECA is presently conducting the TEAM II project. The main aims of TEAM II are to explore recognition of qualifications from joint programmes\* and facilitate accreditation of these programmes.

In order to achieve the aim of the project a variety of activities are being carried out. For example, (1) by developing a European methodology for single accreditation (quality assessment) procedures regarding joint programmes, instead of the multiple procedures that currently have to be carried out separately in each country where the joint programme is provided; (2) by facilitating ENIC/NARICs for sharing good practices regarding the recognition of qualifications from joint programmes, and (3) by offering transparent information on the quality assessment and learning outcomes of joint programmes (mainly via *Qrossroads*). Including NVAO, 18 quality assurance organisations for 12 European countries are involved in TEAM II project. Currently five pilot accreditation procedures\*\* are being carried out by the partner organisations in order to develop a methodology for single accreditation procedures of joint programmes.

\* According to *ECA Principle for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes*, a **joint programme** is defined as 'a programme offered jointly by different higher education institutions irrespective of the degree (joint, multiple and double) awarded', whereas a **joint degree** is 'a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering a joint programme in place of all the national diplomas, attesting the successful completion of this joint programme' (*ENQA TEEP II project*).

\*\* The 5 pilot procedures are: Erasmus Mundus Masters - Journalism and Media within Globalisation (EMMA), European Teacher Education for Primary Schools (ETEPS), Joint European Master in Comparative Local Development (CoDe), Joint European Master in International Humanitarian Assistance (NOHA), European Master of Science in Geosciences of Basins and Lithosphere. NVAO is involved in quality assurance of EMMA, ETEPS, NOHA and European Master of Science in Geosciences of Basins and Lithosphere.

## Automatic recognition of qualifications

In the period 2005-2006, organisations responsible for recognition of foreign qualifications and the accreditation organisations from the Netherlands and Flanders, Norway, Austria, Poland and

Switzerland signed the *Joint Declaration concerning the automatic recognition of qualifications*. More countries are expected to sign this declaration in the near future.

The declaration is based on mutual recognition of accreditation decisions and on the implementation of compatible national qualification frameworks in order to come to automatic recognition of qualifications. This cooperation between accreditation organisations and recognition bodies is considered to be the start of the development of a cross-border qualifications area.

This Joint Declaration was a major advance towards NVAO's eventual aim, i.e. the realisation of a European Qualifications Area where qualifications from accredited programmes and institutions are automatically recognised.

### European Certificate for Internationalisation

NVAO and the Dutch and Flemish higher education institutions are convinced of the importance of internationalisation for education. They view it as an additional contribution to the development of both regions. The Netherlands and Flanders are both indeed very dependent on trade and services and both small regions here depend on good international relations. Internationalisation is therefore self-evident for nearly all professions and disciplines and education would fail terribly if this was not taken into account. Within Dutch and Flemish accreditation frameworks this is referred to as a distinctive (quality) feature.

To underline the importance of internationalisation NVAO intends to develop a certificate. Goals and objectives of a European certificate for internationalisation are: stimulate the level of internationalisation in different countries; enhance the level of internationalisation in higher education institutions; deliver a tool for forming alliances between higher education institutions; give an incentive to those concerned with internationalisation; and reward good and excellent forms of internationalisation.

The NVAO therefore proposes the following principles:

1. The certificate is based on the ambition level of the programme as defined in a policy statement;
2. The certificate is assessed and awarded at the level of the programme;
3. The programme's desired internationalisation must have a significant impact on the overall quality of the programme;
4. The internationalisation of the programme is reflected in the intended and achieved learning outcomes;
5. The operation of internationalisation should be reflected in standards that relate to teaching and learning, staff, services and students;
6. The assessment of internationalisation should be undertaken by a panel that has the appropriate expertise;
7. The assessment takes place on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory - satisfactory - good - excellent.

The framework for the assessment of internationalisation as a distinctive feature consists of 6 standards and each of these standards has at least one criterion.

1. Vision or policy on internationalisation
2. Learning outcomes
3. Teaching and learning
4. Staff
5. Services
6. Students

For more information about Certificate for Internationalisation, please refer to NVAO website:  
<http://www.nvao.net/>

*Source:*

*NVAO website: <http://www.nvao.net/>*

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO): Reforming Quality Assurance and Accreditation in the Netherlands (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*Mark Frederiks (NVAO): Approaches Regarding Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and Internationalisation (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO): Introduction to the TEAM II project (ECA Seminar material, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Graz, Austria).*

*Mark Frederiks (NVAO): Accreditation of Joint Programmes (ECA Seminar material, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Warsaw, Poland).*

*ECA website: <http://www.eaconsortium.net/>*

*Karl Dittrich (NVAO): Toward a (European) certificate for internationalisation? : A NVAO proposal (NVAO-ECA Seminar material, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009, The Hague, The Netherlands).*

*NVAO: Programme accreditation and internationalisation – A distinctive (quality) feature for internationalization - : <http://www.nvao.net/>*

*Grossroads website: <http://www.grossroads.eu/about-grossroads>*

## 2. Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education (Nuffic)

### 2-1) Overview of the organisation

Name of the organisation	Nuffic (Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education)	
Character of the organisation	An independent, non-profit organisation	
Year of establishment	1952	
Location	Head office: Kortenaerkade 11, 2518 AX, The Hague, The Netherlands	
Overseas office	Nuffic Netherlands Education Support Offices (Nuffic Nesos): Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, Taipei, Thailand and Vietnam	
Representative	Sander van den Eijnden, Director-General	
Number of staff	Nuffic employs around 276 people, 216 of whom work at the head office in The Hague Head office.	
Finance	The total sum of programme funding Nuffic spends in 2009 is 132,021,000 Euro.	
	Nuffic's total operating expenses in 2009 are estimated at 24,254,000 Euro.	
	<u>Nuffic's programmes by donor</u> (FY2009)	
	Source	Amount
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	90,755,000 Euro
	European Commission	25,134,000 Euro
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	12,957,000 Euro	
Other	3,175,000 Euro	
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nuffic Board of Trustees</li> <li>• Nuffic Board of Directors</li> <li>• Nuffic Directorates</li> </ul>	
	<u>Organisational structure</u> 1. Capacity building & scholarships Directorate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity Building Programmes Department</li> <li>• National Agency for Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Scholarship Programmes Department</li> </ul> 2. Communication Directorate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Promotion Department</li> <li>• International Recognition Department</li> <li>• Public Information Services Department</li> </ul>	

	<p>3. Knowledge &amp; Innovation Directorate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation Platforms &amp; Knowledge Department</li> <li>• National Commission for UNESCO Secretariat</li> </ul> <p>4. Business Support Directorate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Services Department</li> <li>• Planning &amp; Control Department</li> </ul>
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Source:

*Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/>*

*Nuffic (2010): Nuffic Annual Overview 2009.*

*Sander van den Eijnden (Nuffic): View on Internationalization (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*Marijke Blom-Westrik (Nuffic): Bologna Process – Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

*Marijke Blom-Westrik (Nuffic): Credential Evaluation in the Netherlands (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

## 2-2) Mission

As an independent, non-profit organisation based in the Hague, the Netherlands, Nuffic supports internationalisation in higher education, research and professional education in the Netherlands and abroad, and helps improve access to higher education worldwide.

Source: *Nuffic website: <http://www.nuffic.nl/>*

## 2-3) Main area of activity

### 2-3-1) Education promotion

The Education Promotion Department promotes the position of Dutch higher education abroad as well as institutional cooperation. To support the department's work, Nuffic Netherlands Education Support Offices (Nuffic Neso offices) have been established in ten target countries. The Nuffic Neso offices are also part of the Education Promotion Department. Furthermore, the department wishes to optimise the quality of its service provision by reinforcing the link with target groups and deploying the correct communication instruments to promote incoming mobility. To this end, the department develops, produces and coordinates the generic *Study in Holland* promotion campaign. This includes both online and offline promotion activities, the branding of *Study in Holland* abroad and the coordination of and participation in international education fairs. Finally, the department develops, produces and maintains generic *Holland Alumni network* activities, particularly the virtual network and the biennial Holland Alumni Conference.

### 2-3-2) Scholarships

The Dutch government is attempting to make Dutch higher education as accessible as possible to students and mid-career professionals from other countries. Nuffic manages a large number of programmes for purposes of exchange and cooperation in higher education.

There are schemes that foster cooperation between Dutch higher education institutions and partner institutions in other industrialised countries, including Central and Eastern European Countries. Student exchanges are a common feature of these schemes.

### Scholarship search engine

*Grantfinder* is an online search engine that browses a range of Dutch scholarships for international students who wish to come to the Netherlands. Visit <http://www.grantfinder.nl/> or go to <http://nuffic.nl/scholarships> for the scholarships that are administered by Nuffic.

## 2-3-3) Credential evaluation

### (1) Evaluation of foreign qualifications

Nuffic conducts evaluation of foreign qualifications at the secondary and higher education levels. Nuffic also check whether the programmes and the higher education institutions are officially accredited or recognised. Please refer to page 49 for the introduction of Nuffic's diploma recognition activities.

### (2) Statements in English on Dutch qualifications

Nuffic is regularly asked by Dutch universities and other higher education institutions to produce statements in English on Dutch diplomas and training programmes, which may face recognition problems in other countries. These are often postgraduate professional qualifications and post-master's programmes. The statements are of a general nature and are appended to the diploma issued by the higher education institution.

### (3) In-company training on foreign qualifications in certain fields

Nuffic provides the European Patent Office with tailored courses that help human resource staff understand and evaluate the status, structure and content of European engineering qualifications. The information is also made available in the form of a course book with country-specific modules.

### (4) Consultancy on the implementation of European Directives on the recognition of professional qualifications

When Latvia, Poland and the Czech Republic joined the EU, Nuffic helped them to efficiently implement the European Directives on the recognition of professional qualifications. These two-year projects were conducted together with Colo (Association of National Bodies Responsible for Vocational Training for the Private Sector) and VTL (the national training body for transport and logistics).

## 2-3-4) Professional recognition

### (1) National Contact Point

All 27 countries of the European Union, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland have set up information centres for professional recognition under European Directive.

The National Contact Point (NCP) for professional recognition can give information to people looking to practice their profession in another country. If the profession is a regulated profession as set out in the Directive, the NCP will be able to refer people eligible for professional recognition to the authority responsible for their profession in the other state. The NCP can give advice on professional recognition procedures and supports individuals, for example, by issuing NCP Declarations.

### 2-3-5) Capacity building

Nuffic implements programmes specifically aimed at strengthening the performance of individuals, organisations and institutions in developing countries or to help them develop their capacities by extending their expertise, know-how and skills.

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs therefore finances a number of international education programmes for a number of developing countries with capacity development as the main objective. Nuffic manages these programmes. They read: NFP, NPT and NICHE.

- NFP (Netherlands Fellowship Programmes) is a scholarship programme with three modalities: scholarships to take part in selected international accessible short courses, master degree programmes and PhD studies conducted by Dutch institutions. NFP focuses on education and training of mid career staff in 61 countries, which should lead to capacity building within their organisations, whether public, private sector or non-governmental.
- NPT (Netherlands Programme for Institutional Strengthening of Post-Secondary Education and Training Capacity) aims to strengthen the capacity of post-secondary education and training organisations in 14 countries, but is now being phased out.
- NICHE (Netherlands Initiative for Capacity building in Higher Education) aims to strengthen institutional capacity in 22 developing countries for institutions and organisations providing post-secondary education and training. The programme focuses on selected sectors, areas and themes agreed upon by local authorities and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

### 2-3-6) Consultancy and training

Nuffic offers a number of services which may help education institutions with their internationalisation activities. These services may also interest other organisations and are available worldwide. Providing support with internationalisation issues is one of Nuffic's primary tasks. Below are consultancy and training programmes which Nuffic offers:

#### (1) Consultancy

##### Evaluating the effects of training on students from developing countries

Nuffic evaluates the effects of training on students from developing countries who have followed a study programme or course in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Recently, Nuffic participated in the evaluation of a Norwegian scholarship programme financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), and in the evaluation of the EC-funded Alban-regional cooperation programme. In 2009 Nuffic conducted a tracer study into the effects of study and

training on the personal development and careers of ex-scholarship holders of the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes. The study also looked at the effects on the strengthening of the organisations these ex-scholarship holders work for.

### Evaluation of international cooperation projects and programmes

Nuffic regularly organises independent evaluations of international cooperation projects and programmes, or conducts them on behalf of third parties. In 2000, for example, Nuffic was asked by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to evaluate NUFU, a university research cooperation programme in Norway. In 2004 and 2005, Nuffic provided the team leader for the Joint Review Mission of Education Sector Development Programme in Ethiopia. In 2006, Nuffic provided the team leader for an independent evaluation of the Sida/SAREC bilateral research cooperation programme. In 2008 Nuffic led two evaluations in Bangladesh: a mid-term evaluation of the support to the BRAC University Institute of Educational Development and the evaluation of the third phase of the BRAC Education Programme, including an appraisal of the fourth phase of this programme. For the VLIR-UOS Nuffic was involved in the evaluation of the university cooperation programmes in Bolivia (2007), Cuba (2007), Ecuador (2010) and the Philippines (2010).

### Seminar on organising and managing development projects

Nuffic regularly organises seminars for people involved in the projects that Nuffic manages. These include training in formulating project proposals in accordance with the logical framework method, and the discussion of specific implementation problems. In 2006, Nuffic organised a seminar on best practices in project management. Nuffic regularly organises seminars for organisations participating in the NPT and NICHE programmes. At these seminars Nuffic provides in-depth information about the general and technical aspects of these programmes.

## (2) Training

Nuffic has a wide range of training courses which it offers to higher education institutions and international organisations. Nuffic regularly organises courses for the staff of Dutch universities and other higher education institutions. However, Nuffic also offers training courses to international organisations such as training course in international credential evaluation.

Nuffic offers various courses in international credential evaluation, that vary in content, level, length and mode of delivery, depending on the target group and the client's specific requests. All courses include modules on the criteria and procedures used in credential evaluation, problems regarding authenticity and practical applications, which can be supplemented by modules covering background information on educational systems, use of information resources, accreditation and recognition and international trends.

## 2-3-7) Information services

Nuffic offers a number of products that provide clients with information about credential evaluation and related subjects. Most information is provided electronically so that news and



information on the latest developments is always available immediately.

Most important sources of Nuffic's information are:

- Extranet: Website intended for Dutch admission officers and recruiters. The website is filled with the latest developments and news in the field of diploma recognition.
- The newsletter: Nuffic publishes a twice-yearly newsletter (in Dutch), featuring articles on the work of the department and new developments in the education systems of other countries and the comparability of programmes and diplomas.
- A number of websites that cover the entire spectrum of credential evaluation, higher education and professional recognition, including: <http://www.idw.nl/>, <http://www.professionalrecognition.nl/> and <http://www.bologna-in.nl/>.
- Country Modules: A country module contains general information about the education system of a specific country. In the module, you will also find information about the main qualifications issued in a specific country, as well as the evaluation of these qualifications in the Netherlands. This evaluation gives an indication of the overall level of the foreign qualification compared to a Dutch qualification. Currently, Nuffic is preparing *Country Module Japan* which includes information about the structure of the education system of Japan and the evaluation of degrees obtained in Japan for the purpose of admission to, and placement in, study programmes in Dutch higher education.

### 2-3-8) International network

Nuffic contributes to the exchange of ideas between the government and higher education institutions by providing information and analysis on the internationalisation of higher education.

Nuffic has formal contacts with three sector organisations in the higher education sector: the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO-raad), the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and SAIL (Council of Institutes for Postgraduate International Education in the Netherlands), the representative body for international education.

Nuffic also works together with partners in other countries. The most important international networks involved in include:

- *ACA - Academic Cooperation Association*  
Membership organisation established in Brussels, dedicated to the management and improvement of international cooperation in higher education (<http://www.aca-secretariat.be/>). Nuffic is a founding member of ACA.
- *Neth-ER - Netherlands House for Education and Research*  
Based in Brussels, Neth-ER is an international association founded by eight Dutch frontline organisations active in research, education and innovation. Nuffic is one of those organisations. Their common purpose is to increase the participation of the Netherlands in European action programmes (<http://www.neth-er.eu/>).
- *ASIE - Association for Studies in International Education*  
ASIE (<http://www.asie.org/>) is a network of organisations promoting research into

international education and academic mobility. Responsibility for running ASIE rotates between the participating organisations every five years. Nuffic holds this position for the five year period 2007-2011. The organisations represent international educators throughout the globe with members from each continent.

- *ENIC-NARIC – collaborative link between the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC)*  
Networks founded by the Council of Europe/UNESCO and the European Union, respectively, and concerned with the evaluation and recognition of diplomas and awards in Europe; Nuffic is the ENIC and NARIC for the Netherlands (<http://www.enic-naric.net/>). Nuffic is one of the largest and most respected members of these networks.
- *EUA – European University Association*  
EUA (<http://www.eua.be/>) is based in Brussels and represents universities in 46 countries, providing them with a unique forum to cooperate and keep abreast of the latest trends in higher education and research policies. Nuffic is an institutional member of EUA.
- *EAIE – European Association of International Education*  
Network of people working in international education and expert group for exchanging know-how and sharing experience (<http://www.eaie.org/>). The EAIE was founded in the Netherlands and Nuffic staff have been playing a significant role in this association over the years.
- *NAFSA – Association of International Educators (USA)*  
NAFSA serves its members, their institutions and organisations, and others engaged in international education and exchange and global workforce development, by creating and disseminating knowledge, influencing public policy and maintaining a strong association (<http://www.nafsa.org>). Nuffic has been coordinating the representation of Dutch higher education at NAFSA over the years.

Source:

*Nuffic website:* <http://www.nuffic.nl/>

*Nuffic (2010): Nuffic Annual Overview 2009.*

*Sander van den Eijnden (Nuffic): View on Internationalization (NIAD-UE Seminar material, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Tokyo, Japan).*

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