



# Guide for IB students considering higher education in the Netherlands

*This guide provides a brief introduction to the Dutch higher education system and its application process, as well as information specifically relevant to IB students.*

## Context

The Netherlands is one of the most developed nations in the world, known for its tolerant and liberal ethos. It has a high quality and international system of higher education that dates back to the 16th century. Despite its relatively small size, the Netherlands has 13 universities ranked in the top 300 and 5 within the top 100.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to a wide range of courses in Dutch, the Netherlands has more than 2,100 international study programmes and courses taught in English. You can view available options at: [www.studyinholland.nl](http://www.studyinholland.nl). These factors combined with relatively modest tuition fees make the Netherlands one of Europe's most popular destinations for higher education.<sup>2</sup>

## Quality assurance

[NVAO](http://www.nvaov.nl) guarantees the higher education system's standard level of quality and alignment with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. All degree programmes offered by research universities and

universities of applied sciences are evaluated according to established criteria. All accredited programmes are listed in the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO).

## Types of HEIs

In the Netherlands, there are three types of higher education institutions (HEIs): government-funded, government-approved and private. There are two main types of institutions: Research universities and universities of applied sciences. Thirteen of the research universities, the Open University and more than 50 universities of applied sciences are considered government-funded.

**Research universities** mainly offer research-oriented programmes in an academic setting. However, many of their programmes are in a professional setting or have a professional component and most graduates go on to careers that are not necessarily research related. There are 14 research universities in the Netherlands, including the Open University, but collaboration with universities of

<sup>1</sup>QS World University Rankings® 2015/16

<sup>2</sup><http://www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/europe/netherlands/guide>  
<https://www.studyinholland.nl/education-system>

[http://www.expatica.com/nl/education/Study-in-the-Netherlands-University-in-the-Netherlands\\_104928.html](http://www.expatica.com/nl/education/Study-in-the-Netherlands-University-in-the-Netherlands_104928.html)

applied sciences is common. University colleges, which are generally part of a research university, also offer undergraduate programmes, mainly in liberal arts. The research universities vary in size, with enrolments ranging from 6,000 to 30,000 students.

**Universities of applied sciences** (*hogescholen* in Dutch) generally offer professional programmes that focus on the practical application of the arts and sciences to prepare students for a specific career. Practical work experience and internships are often an important part of the professional study programmes offered at these institutions. The largest universities of applied sciences enrol 20,000 to 40,000 students.

**Institutes for international education** are a third, smaller branch of higher education with programmes designed especially for international students. These institutions typically only offer non-degree programmes or courses leading to a Master's degree.

## Degree types

The basic types of degrees offered in the Netherlands include Associates, Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral. Both research universities and universities of applied sciences offer bachelor's or master's degrees. You first obtain a bachelor's degree (first cycle), you can then continue to study for a master's degree (second cycle) and then a doctoral degree programme (third cycle).

**Associate degrees**, offered only at universities of applied sciences, are typically 2-year professional programmes leading to a career or continued study in a bachelor's programme. Currently, around 60 associate degree programmes are available in a variety of fields.

**Bachelor's degrees** are offered at both research universities and universities of applied sciences. There are quite a wide range of programmes in a range of disciplines offered in the Netherlands.

Universities of applied sciences offer degrees in a wide variety of disciplines and formats, including honours programmes, majors and minors, and dual programmes. Most are 4-year degrees structured around an introductory year (*propedeuse*), followed by the main phase of three years. These degrees focus on the skills and competencies needed for a job in a specific field, and thus often offer practical experience through internships, classroom instruction, projects and group assignments.

Research universities offer both discipline-based bachelor's degrees and interdisciplinary liberal arts degrees at

university colleges. These programmes teach the academic and scientific skills associated with a traditional academic discipline and are meant to prepare students for further study as well as employment. The content of the programmes can vary from broad to very specialized, but generally include a course in research methodology and a bachelor's thesis.

Type of institution	Degrees and duration
Universities of applied sciences	Associate (Ad): 2 years
	Bachelor (B+field of study/ BSc/BA): 4 years
	Master (M+field of study/ MSc/MA): 1–2 years
Research universities	Bachelor of Science/Arts (BSc/BA): 3 years
	Master of Science/Arts (MSc/MA): 1–2 years
Institutes for international education	Master of Science/Arts (MSc/MA): 1–2 years

## Applying to Dutch HEIs

### Choosing an area of study

In most instances, students apply directly to the study programme within the institution they are interested in. Programmes within a single institution may have significantly different entry requirements. In some cases, they may even have completely separate application procedures.

### Entry requirements

Typically, for entry into a Dutch bachelor's degree programme a Dutch *vwo* diploma (research universities) or *havo* diploma or *mbo* diploma, level 4 (universities of applied sciences) is required. Of course, numerous other international qualifications, including the IB diploma and in some cases the IB CP certificate, are accepted.

Admission requirements for most study programmes are now expressed in terms of specific tracks that students need to have completed in their secondary school programme. The four specific tracks are known as "subject clusters". They are culture and society, economics and society, science and health or science and technology.<sup>3</sup> These changes have affected the admission requirements for students with foreign and international qualifications, including the IB diploma. However, for many English-taught programmes these profiles are not necessary.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.epnuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-the-netherlands.pdf>

At times, additional other criteria must be met. Because of the limited number of available places for some courses, candidates may be selected by an admissions committee. Therefore, meeting minimum entry requirements does not guarantee a place in the programme. Academic performance, international experience, motivation and other factors may all be taken into account.

For access to certain programmes, particularly those in the fine arts, students must demonstrate the required artistic abilities. The only access requirement for the Open University is that applicants be at least 18 years of age.

As undergraduate programmes in the Netherlands are mostly in Dutch or English, students will need to demonstrate a sufficient level of fluency in the relevant language.

As with any European Union nation, the visa process differs according to citizenship. **EU nationals** do not need a visa to study in the Netherlands. **Non-EU nationals**, depending on nationality, may need to apply for a provisional residence permit, known as an *MVV (Machtiging tot Voorlopig Verblijf)*. The website [Study in Holland](#) has the relevant information.

### The quota (numerus-fixus) system

Certain oversubscribed courses, primarily in the medical sciences, are deemed “*numerus fixus*”. Until 2017, to get a place in one of these courses, students need to be successful in a weighted lottery. Per academic year, students are allowed to apply for a maximum of two study programmes with a decentralized selection procedure. These two applications can also be for the same study programme at two different institutions. For Medicine, Dentistry, Physiotherapy and Dental Hygiene, students may only choose one.

As of 2017/18, the Dutch government will abolish the lottery system, and allow HEIs to select the students for their own *fixus* programmes. This is called a decentralized selection procedure. In this decentralized procedure, a committee assesses the application based on criteria such as motivation, personality and previous academic performance. The criteria may differ between institutions and programmes.

### Application process

There are two systems for applying to Dutch universities: directly to the institution and through Studielink. The path depends on the university course to which you are applying. Studielink is used as an online application

system for some courses, but all applicants must register by law in Studielink regardless of the application process, otherwise their application will not be finalized. Students who are applying for a *numerus fixus* programme must register in Studielink before 15 January. It is best to check with the website of the specific course you intend to apply to for the most accurate information on application procedures.

Typically, students who apply via Studielink will then hear from their university of choice on whether they satisfy the requirements. The exact course of the procedure depends on the type of programme. If a student is considered “admissible”, they can begin working with the university directly on fulfilling any additional entry requirements. Programmes with open admission require “matching”, and programmes with decentralized selection have their own placing procedures. If students satisfy all of the requirements they can be admitted and enrol.

### Cost

Tuition fees vary depending on whether the student is from the EU, or whether they are attending a public or private institution. The average annual fee for EU students is €1,950. Non-EU students should expect to pay between €6,000 and €15,000. However, there are various scholarship options available. The fees at private institutions can be substantially higher. Some institutions have application fees as well.

### Timeline

For most programmes, Studielink opens in October prior to the starting year, and applications are typically due between January and May. Note that for *numerus fixus* programmes, you must complete the application in Studielink by 15 January. After students register and/or apply in Studielink, the university informs students on any further application procedures. Between May and September, the university may assist students with finalizing programme selection. The basic steps of applying through Studielink are:

1. Register in Studielink
2. Complete application via the intended university/programme website
3. Upload the application documents
4. The University assesses admissibility
5. Follow the admissions procedure
6. Complete registration and pay tuition fees

## Information for IB students

As a Dutch national policy, IB diploma holders are admissible to higher education in the Netherlands. As the admission cycle generally takes place before IB results are released, DP candidates may be provisionally admitted on the basis of their anticipated score reported by their schools. However, students must always be able to verify their results and that they obtained the full IB diploma after results are released.

There are some minimum course requirements for entry into Dutch programmes.

- Economics, econometrics and (international) business studies:
  - Mathematics SL
- Universities of applied sciences:
  - Mathematics HL
  - Physics HL (chemistry at HL instead of physics for certain fields)
  - Chemistry at SL (or physics at SL when chemistry is offered at HL)
- Medical and related fields:<sup>4</sup>
  - Biology at HL
  - Chemistry at SL (including options for organic and higher physical chemistry)
  - Physics at SL (including options for biomedical physics and optics)
  - Mathematics SL

Please note that universities in the Netherlands are autonomous and admission requirements may vary with institution.

Pupils who successfully complete the IB Career-related Programme are eligible for higher professional education (HBO) in the Netherlands. To compare the IB subjects with the Dutch subject clusters, EP-Nuffic has carried out a deficiency study; see the EP-Nuffic website for the study results (only in Dutch).

Since no full diploma has been obtained, DP Courses are not sufficient for admission to higher education in the Netherlands, neither higher professional education (HBO) nor academic education (WO). Students who offer individual DP courses in combination with a national diploma or qualification may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Exemption from the Dutch language test can be granted if a candidate has taken Dutch as language A (SL or HL) or as language B at HL.<sup>5</sup>

## Who sends transcripts?

In 2015, 1,407 IB students from schools in 104 countries requested to send 2,084 transcripts to 57 Dutch institutions; an average of 1.5 transcripts per student. This makes the Netherlands the 5th most popular destination for international IB transcripts, and the 7th most popular destination overall. Given recent trends, it is conceivable that the Netherlands will become the 4th most popular destination for international IB students within the next few years.

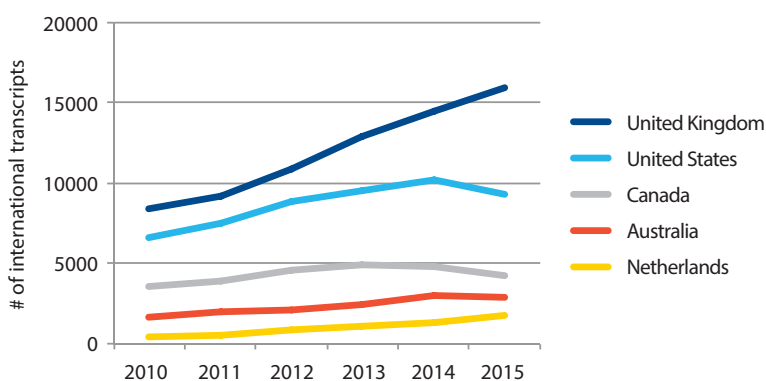


Figure 1: The number of transcripts sent to the five most popular destination countries by non-domestic IB students, 2010-2015

The make-up of IB students sending transcripts to the Netherlands is incredibly diverse. Domestic transcripts only account for 18% of the total, and those from Dutch passport holders abroad only account for another 17%. Thus, 65% of all IB students sending transcripts to the Netherlands are international students who completed the DP outside of the Netherlands. Additionally, they come from very diverse locations, though mostly from the EU and Asia.

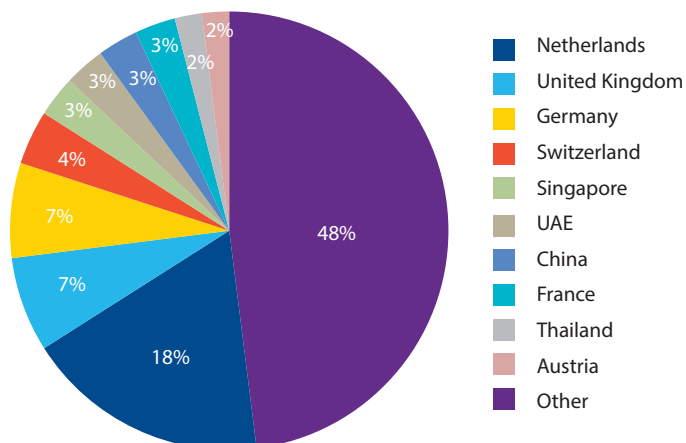


Figure 2: Origins of IB transcripts sent to the Netherlands in 2015.

<sup>4</sup>Note that to study medicine in the Netherlands, a student needs to take three sciences. As a result, a DP student will either need to take a 7th subject or obtain special permission from the IBO beforehand to take a science course in lieu of an individuals and societies course.

<sup>5</sup><https://www.epnuffic.nl/en/diploma-recognition/overviews-foreign-diplomas/overview-diplomas-international-baccalaureate>  
<https://www.epnuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-international-baccalaureate.pdf>

## Where are transcripts sent?

After aggregating individual programmes and university colleges under parent institutions, 57 HEIs received transcripts from IB students, and 9 of these received more than 50 transcripts. More than half of these were ranked in the top 100 global research universities<sup>6</sup>, and all but 1 were ranked in the top 300.<sup>7</sup>

IB specific information on each of these universities is outlined below.

## Information on the 9 institutions that received the most transcripts from IB students<sup>8</sup>

DELFT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY		
<b>General admissions information</b>		
If you hold an IB diploma and have passed the specified IB examination subjects, you are eligible for admission to the Bachelor programmes of TU Delft.	<b>Total undergraduate enrolment</b>	11k
	<b>Global ranking</b>	64
	<b>Average DP score</b>	33.6
<b>Example course requirements</b>		
<b>Aerospace Engineering (English stream)</b>	English + mathematics HL + physics HL	
<b>Applied Earth Sciences (English stream)</b>	English + mathematics HL + physics HL	
Note: TU Delft has decided to require mathematics HL, effective as of intake 2018. For the transition year of intake 2016–2017 + 2017–2018, students with a mathematics SL will still be considered for admission.		
<b>Additional considerations</b>		
If your IB schooling has been in the English language, you are exempted from the English language requirement. Holders of an IB-diploma with the subject “Dutch B” and wishing to study in a Dutch-medium programme, must take an assessment at TU Delft, and may be required to enrol in part of the Dutch language course. If your IB diploma includes neither Dutch A nor B, you may be required to take the entire Dutch language course.		
ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM		
<b>General admissions information</b>		
The IB diploma is accepted as an entry qualification. Entry requirements and prerequisites vary by undergraduate programme.	<b>Total undergraduate enrolment</b>	13k
	<b>Global ranking</b>	126
	<b>Average DP score</b>	33.6
<b>Example course requirements</b>		
<b>BSc International Business Administration:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimum of 33 points (TOK, EE and CAS included)</li> <li>• minimum grade of 5 for mathematics SL <b>OR</b> minimum grade of 4 for mathematics HL</li> <li>• minimum grade of 5 for English A SL <b>OR</b> minimum grade of 4 for English A HL <b>OR</b> minimum grade of 5 for English B HL</li> </ul>		
<b>Additional considerations</b>		
You need a good command of the English language before you can apply for a degree programme at Erasmus University. Exemption from English proficiency exams is possible for scores in English A HL or SL or English B HL.		

<sup>6</sup>QS World University Rankings® 2015/16

<sup>7</sup>The institution that was not ranked was not eligible for inclusion in the rankings because it is not a comprehensive research university.

<sup>8</sup>These institutions are listed in alphabetical order, and inclusion here does not necessarily indicate that these institutions have the most generous or appropriate offerings for IB students. Whenever possible text is quoted directly from the university's website. QS is used for the global rankings. Average DP score is that of transcripts sent, and may differ from that of admitted students.

## LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

### General admissions information

The IB diploma awarded after the completion of the full IB Diploma Programme, is sufficient for general admission. IB certificates are only taken into consideration in combination with national diplomas that grant admission to higher education. When you apply, kindly include official predicted grades from your school and ensure that the levels of all subjects, including language subjects, are clearly stated (HL, SL, A or B, and so on).

Total undergraduate enrolment	14k
Global ranking	95
Average DP score	32.4

### Example course requirements

**BA Liberal Arts and Sciences:** Global Challenges: Students must present an IB Diploma taught in English with a minimum score of 4 in mathematics SL or HL or a minimum of 5 in mathematical studies. Students may be exempted from the remedial maths course if they present an IB Diploma taught in English with a minimum score of 4 in mathematics SL or HL or a minimum of 5 in mathematical studies.

### Additional considerations

You can be exempted from English proficiency requirement if you have an English-taught IB diploma. An IB diploma with Dutch A SL or HL or Dutch B HL may qualify for exemption from the Dutch language requirements.

## THE HAGUE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

### General admissions information

The International Baccalaureate diploma is an acceptable qualification for our three-year programmes. THUAS offers a wide range of international Bachelor programmes in English, several of which offer an accelerated track for advanced students (including IB graduates).

Total undergraduate enrolment	25k
Global ranking	N/A
Average DP score	30.1

### Example course requirements

No programme specific entry requirements could be found.

### Additional considerations

If you obtained an IB diploma, you might qualify for an exception to the English proficiency requirements. Please contact the [Enrolment Centre](#) and ask for details.

## TILBURG UNIVERSITY

### General admissions information

To be admitted to a Bachelor's programme at Tilburg University, you will need to meet several application requirements: diploma requirements, English language proficiency requirements, and for some of our programmes also mathematics requirements. The IB diploma is an acceptable qualification for entry. A passing score in mathematics SL is required for Business and Economics courses.

Total undergraduate enrolment	5k
Global ranking	293
Average DP score	31.3

### Example course requirements

**BA/BSc in Liberal Arts and Sciences:** Students must earn the IB diploma with English as one exam subject.

### Additional considerations

You meet the English language requirements if you have obtained an IB, including English language as a part of the curriculum.

## UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

### General admissions information

International Baccalaureate: Diploma or official record from the IB Office in Geneva >24 points and mathematics at SL or HL (mathematical studies is not accepted).

Total undergraduate enrolment	17k
Global ranking	55
Average DP score	33.2

### Example course requirements

No IB specific programme requirements could be found. However, some programmes may have prerequisite course requirements. Students are advised to check with the individual faculty they are interested in for further details.

### Additional considerations

Applicants with an IB diploma may be exempt from the English proficiency testing requirements.

## UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

### General admissions information

The IB diploma is accepted as a qualification for admissions into undergraduate programmes.

Total undergraduate enrolment	18k
Global ranking	100
Average DP score	32.9

### Example course requirements

**BSc International Business:** Mathematics SL or HL is required.



## UNIVERSITY OF MAASTRICHT

### General admissions information

The IB diploma is accepted as an entry qualification. For some programmes, there are additional subject requirements and/or language requirements.

Total undergraduate enrolment	10k
Global ranking	169
Average DP score	32.7

### Example course requirements

**BSc International business:** Mathematics SL or HL or further mathematics is required

## UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

### General admissions information

The IB diploma is accepted as an entry qualification. For some programmes, there are additional subject requirements and/or language requirements.

Total undergraduate enrolment	20k
Global ranking	94
Average DP score	33.7

### Example course requirements

**BSc Pharmaceutical Sciences:** Achieve the IB diploma with chemistry HL, physics SL and mathematics SL. Mathematical studies is not accepted.

### Additional considerations

The IB diploma taught in English satisfies the university's language requirements.



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