

A preparatory year before admission to a Dutch university

This information leaflet is intended for international students who would like to enrol in a degree programme at a Dutch higher education institution (a research university or a university of applied sciences (*hogeschool*)), but who are not yet eligible for admission to the programme of their choice.

In order to be accepted to a degree programme, international students must meet the admission criteria of their chosen higher education institution. Depending on the language in which the study programme is taught, one of the criteria is usually a certain level of competence in English or Dutch. If you have not yet achieved the required level, you may be granted conditional admission to the programme. In this case, Dutch immigration law allows you to come to Holland one year before starting your chosen programme in order to gain the required competence(s) and pass certain examinations set by the university.

What is a 'preparatory year' and how do I enrol for it?

A preparatory year is a customized programme which prepares you for a study programme at a Dutch higher education institution. In most cases a preparatory year will consist of language courses, but it may also include classes related to your chosen discipline. For example, if you are applying to be admitted to an engineering programme, you might need to improve your knowledge of mathematics. Holland has various language schools that offer specific training for international students in their preparatory year. Most of these are affiliated with a university. If you need to take preparatory courses, the Dutch higher education institution to which you have applied will most likely refer you to a school in the same geographic region.

Am I expected to have a basic knowledge of the language or other preparatory subjects?

Dutch immigration law allows international students exactly 12 months of preparation. This means that you must be able to meet the criteria set by the Dutch higher education institution within those 12 months. A preparatory year cannot be extended under any circumstances and, if you fail to meet the requirements, you will not get a chance to try again. This means that you should only start a preparatory year programme if you can reasonably expect to qualify for the obligatory final exam. If you have no prior knowledge of the language or other relevant subjects at all, this will probably be very difficult to achieve.

Do I need a visa?

Whether you need a visa and/or a residence permit depends on your nationality. Consult the websites listed below to find out which immigration procedures apply to you. In most cases, international students need a 'provisional residence permit' before coming to Holland (known in Dutch as a *machtiging tot voorlopig verblijf* or MVV).

How does the immigration procedure work?

If you need a provisional residence permit (MVV) your Dutch host institution will probably handle most of the paperwork in the form of an 'advisory procedure'. This precedes the formal application for the provisional residence permit. You must submit this formal application yourself in person at a Dutch embassy or consulate. The fee for an MVV application is € 250 and must be paid by automatic bank transfer by the host institution. Paying the fee does not automatically mean that your application will be granted, and it must be paid even if your application is turned down. Since you cannot be sure that your MVV application will be granted, you are advised to wait for a reply before arranging your travel to Holland.

MVVs are only granted to students who can provide the following documents:

- a letter of conditional admission from a Dutch research university or university of applied sciences which has signed the Code of Conduct (see www.internationalstudy.nl), stating the exams they require you to pass before you can be admitted, as well as the study programme to which you will be admitted and the date of admission, subject to a pass in the necessary exams;
- proof that you can support yourself financially;
- a valid passport.

When collecting your MVV at the embassy you will need to present your passport and you may be asked to present an authenticated birth certificate as proof of identification. We advise you to make sure you have an authenticated birth certificate ready, as you may also need it for formalities upon arrival in Holland.

Once you have arrived in Holland you need to apply for a residence permit. The host institution will do so on your behalf. If you do not need an MVV to enter Holland, you may still need to apply for a residence permit, depending on your nationality. The same documents as mentioned above must be attached to the application which your host institution will hand in on your behalf.

Can I take a part-time job while I'm studying?

Yes, you can. However, specific rules and restrictions apply depending on your nationality. These rules are the same no matter whether you are enrolled in a preparatory year or in a degree programme. For more information about finding a job and the applicable rules, see the 'International students and part-time jobs' factsheet on www.studyinholland.nl.

Start your preparatory year in September!

Be sure to begin your preparatory year at the right time of year. The best time is September, as almost all degree programmes also start in September. This gives you exactly one year to prepare. Remember that you cannot extend your preparatory year, and starting earlier than September could cause problems later on due to the gap in your residence status. If you start later than September, you are in effect giving yourself less than 12 months to prepare.

Further information

www.studyinholland.nl

Provides general information about studying in Holland, information about immigration and residence procedures for international students, and contact details for university language centres.

www.ind.nl/EN/index.asp

Website of the Dutch Immigration & Naturalisation Service.

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• Capacity Building & Scholarships

Administering international mobility programmes (scholarships) and institutional cooperation programmes.

• Communication

Providing information about higher education systems in the Netherlands and in other countries; providing credential evaluation services; providing information in the Netherlands about studying abroad, and in other countries about studying in Holland; promoting Dutch higher education in other countries; encouraging international mobility.

• Knowledge & Innovation

Conducting studies into international cooperation in higher education; providing information to expert groups and consultation forums; transferring our knowledge of international cooperation in higher education through courses and seminars.

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