

# Incoming degree mobility

in Dutch higher education 2022-23

4<sup>th</sup> May 2023

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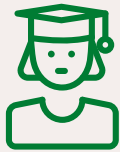
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# Key findings

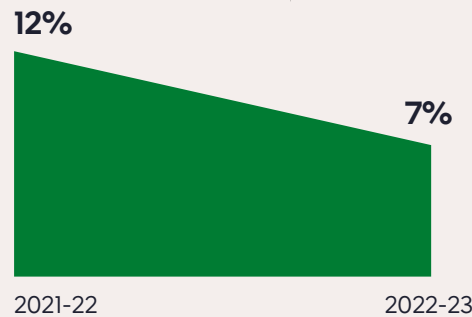
In this annual report we present data from 2022-23 on international degree students in the Netherlands, also known as incoming degree mobility.



# 122,287

international degree students were enrolled in Dutch higher education in 2022-23, representing 15% of all degree students.

### Growth in international degree student population slows down



### Number of new international student enrolments stabilises



### 50,876 new international degree students

enrolled in Dutch higher education in 2022-23, almost the same number as the previous year.



### Engineering fastest growing field of study



Universities of applied sciences



Research universities



# 47%

### more Ukrainian degree students

There were 1,095 Ukrainian degree students in Dutch higher education in 2022-23.



### Sharp decline in incoming degree mobility from the UK since Brexit



# 42%

### decrease since 2020-21

# Introduction



In the academic year 2022-23, global student mobility took place against backdrop of economic instability and high inflation, geopolitical tension and ongoing conflict. On a national level, the growing number of international degree students enrolling in Dutch higher education is increasingly in the spotlight and a topic of political debate.

In this annual report we present the data from 2022-23 on international degree students in the Netherlands, also known as **'incoming degree mobility'**. Our analysis of the current trends and developments is based on the latest DUO register data. The goal of the report is to inform the public of the actual situation regarding international degree students and to supply the political debate with facts. We hope that the information provided will help policymakers to reach evidence-based decisions around incoming degree mobility.

## Definitions

The scope of this report is degree mobility, meaning international students who are enrolled in full degree programmes at publicly-financed Dutch higher education institutions. We do not include international degree students enrolled at privately-financed Dutch higher education institutions, of which there were approximately 1,700 in 2019<sup>1</sup>. International students who come to the Netherlands for part of their study programme or an internship (known as credit mobility) are also outside the scope of this report. For the most recent available data on credit mobility within the Erasmus+ programme, please refer to our dashboard on [Erasmus+ higher education student mobility](#).

In line with the definition used by the Dutch Ministry of Finance (2019<sup>2</sup>), we do not count homecoming students as international degree students. Homecoming students are students who hold Dutch citizenship and have obtained secondary education outside of the Netherlands (ISCED 3). These students are more likely to speak Dutch, more likely to have a social network in the Netherlands, and they qualify for the same benefits as Dutch

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- 1 DUO, 2019. *Niet-bekostigd hoger onderwijs in cijfers*. Retrieved via <https://www.nrto.nl/wp-content/uploads/factsfigures-HO-duostaatvhonderwijs.pdf>
  - 2 Ministry of Finance, 2019. *IBO Internationalisering van het (hoger) onderwijs*. Retrieved via [https://www.eerstekamer.nl/overig/20190906/ibo\\_internationalisering\\_van\\_het/document](https://www.eerstekamer.nl/overig/20190906/ibo_internationalisering_van_het_document)



students graduating from the Dutch secondary school system. There were 16,853 homecoming students enrolled in higher education in the Netherlands in 2022-23.

### **Current developments**

To provide a broader national and global context for this year's statistics on incoming degree student mobility, we also discuss the following current developments:

- End of all remaining Covid-19 restrictions in the Netherlands
- (Re)introduction of the basic grant for students (in Dutch: *basisbeurs*)
- New training requirements for psychotherapists in Germany
- Implications of Brexit for degree mobility from the UK
- Arrangements for students fleeing the war in Ukraine
- Government announces new measures to regulate incoming degree mobility

### **More information online**

The text and figures in this report provide a detailed analysis of the current state of affairs with regard to incoming degree mobility and its most important developments. We offer additional information online, for example, data on specific countries and study programmes. Our interactive dashboards with facts and figures can be found at [www.nuffic.nl/facts-and-figures](http://www.nuffic.nl/facts-and-figures).

Note that some of the figures in this publication may differ slightly from those reported in previous editions or online. This is because DUO makes small corrections to the existing student register data every time new data is published.



# 1. Total numbers and yearly growth rates





### **More international degree students in Dutch higher education in 2022-23, but growth declining**

In the academic year 2022-23, 122,287 international students were enrolled for a full degree programme at publicly-funded higher education institutions in the Netherlands. This is 8,032 more international degree students than there were in 2021-22, representing an increase of 7%. Since 2018-19, year-on-year growth in international degree student numbers has ranged between 10% and 12%. The rate of growth this year is thus notably slower.

In 2022-2023, 15% of all students in Dutch higher education are international, up from 13.7% in 2021-22. This is partly due to the reduced number of Dutch students in higher education in the Netherlands this year; a decrease of 3.2% compared to last year.



#### **University of applied sciences (UAS)**

Higher professional education and applied research with a strong orientation towards professional practice.

#### **Research university (RU)**

Higher education institutions responsible for offering research-oriented programmes in an academic setting.

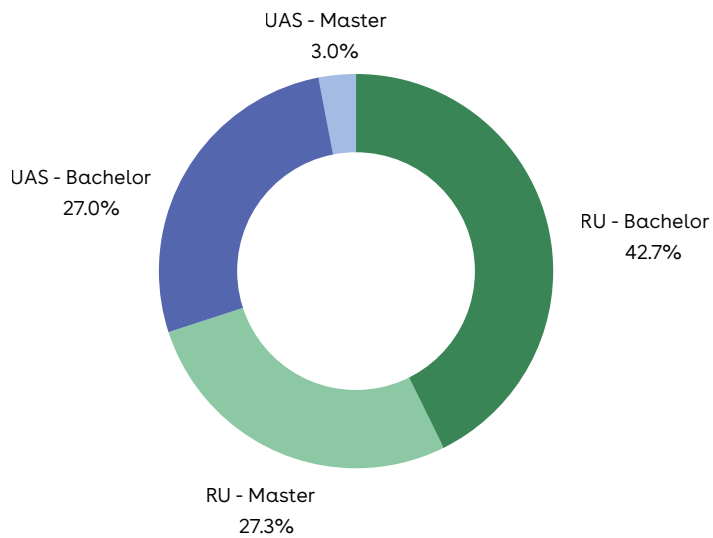
### **Research university bachelor still the most popular choice for international degree students**

In total there are 85,605 international degree students studying at research universities this year, more than twice the number at university of applied sciences (36,682). Since 2018, the most popular choice for international degree students in the Netherlands has been the research university (RU) bachelor. In 2022-23, 42.7% of all international degree students are enrolled on an RU bachelor's programme (see Figure 1). The RU bachelor also shows the largest absolute increase compared to 2021-22, with more than 5,000 additional international degree students this year (see Figure 2).

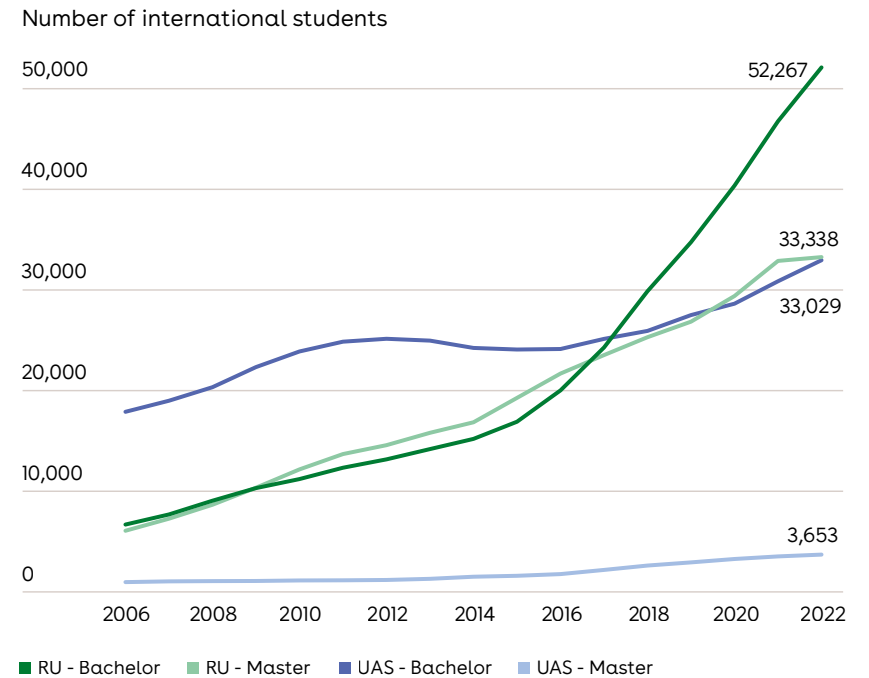
Just over 1 in 4 international degree students (27.3%) follows a master's programme at a research university, similar to the proportion enrolled on a bachelor's programme at a university of applied sciences (UAS; 27%). RU master's students outnumbered UAS bachelor's students for the first time in 2020. However, the trend visible in Figure 2 suggests that the UAS bachelor is likely to regain its position next year as the second most popular type of degree amongst international students. As in previous years, UAS master's programmes attract the fewest international degree students, with just 3% of the total in 2022-23.



**Figure 1.** Total international degree student population in 2022-23 by type of institution and degree



**Figure 2.** Incoming degree mobility by type of institution and type of degree (2006-07 to 2022-23)







### **Largest shares of international degree students at master's level**

At both types of institution, the largest share of international degree students can be seen at master's level. Some 26.8% of all RU master's students in 2022-23 are international, and 24.5% of all UAS master's students. At bachelor's level there are large differences between the institution types. About 1 in 4 research university bachelor's students (24.1%) is international, compared to 7.1% bachelor's students at universities of applied sciences. All degree types have seen an increase in the share of international degree students compared to 2021-22.

### **Pilot Smarter Academic Year**

Efforts are being made to reduce the pressure on both students and staff in the higher education sector. This includes changes to the structure of the academic year, such as reducing the number of weeks of teaching and exams.

### **Current development 1: End of all remaining Covid-19 restrictions in the Netherlands**

As of March 2023, Covid-19 has been downscaled to a flu in the Netherlands, and government advice no longer states that people with symptoms should test or self-isolate. Although in some other parts of the world Covid-19 restrictions remain in place or have been reinstated, incoming degree mobility to the Netherlands does not seem to have been affected.

The Covid-19 pandemic did draw attention to the well-being of (international) students. In 2022, Nuffic published research on the well-being and study satisfaction of international students in Dutch higher education. The increase in mental health issues and feelings of stress and loneliness due to the pandemic also became a focus for the government and higher education institutions in the Netherlands. Efforts are being made to reduce the pressure on both students and staff in the higher education sector. This includes changes to the structure of the academic year, such as reducing the number of weeks of teaching and exams. The 'smarter academic year' is currently being piloted at 15 Dutch higher education institutions.



## 2. New enrolments





### **Fewer new Dutch enrolments**

The number of Dutch students enrolling in higher education has fallen since 2021-22. In the current academic year, there were 215,180 new Dutch enrolments, which is 6.3% fewer than the previous year. A possible explanation for this is students postponing their studies because of the expected return of the basic student grant (see Current development 2).

### **Number of new international enrolments stabilises**

Public institutions of higher education in the Netherlands received 50,876 new international enrolments from 159 different countries in the academic year 2022-23. This is only slightly more than were recorded the previous year (+219), an increase of 0.4%. For comparison, there were 15.6% more new international enrolments in 2021-22 relative to the year before. The marginal increase this year suggests that numbers of new international enrolments may have stabilised. Almost 1 in 5 (19.1%) of all new enrolments in the Netherlands was international in 2022-23.



### **What are new enrolments?**

By 'new enrolments' we mean degree students enrolling on a given study programme for the first time (as opposed to those re-registering for a given programme). An alternative definition of 'new enrolments' (used by Statistics Netherlands, for example) refers to degree students enrolling in Dutch higher education for the very first time. According to this definition, almost all 'new enrolments' at master's level are international, because most Dutch master's students have previously been enrolled on a bachelor's programme in the Netherlands. This creates a skewed picture of the overall percentage of 'new enrolments' that is international. In this report we consider both Dutch and international students enrolling on a given master's (or bachelor's) programme for the first time as 'new enrolments'.

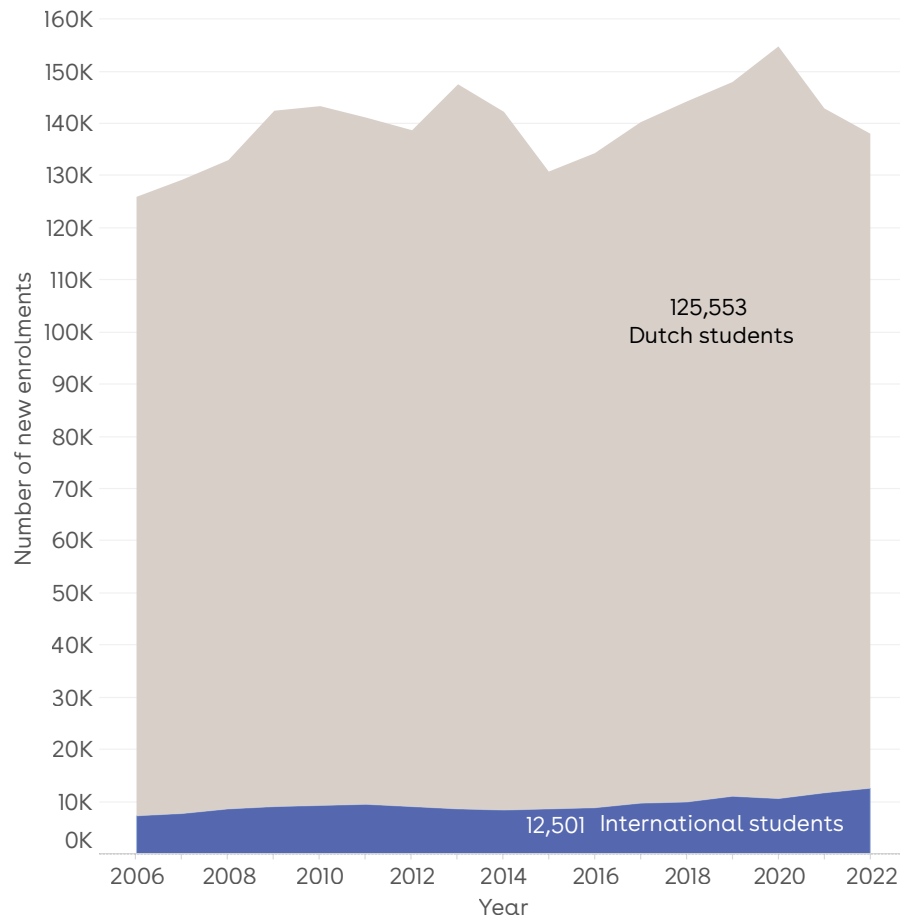
### **Fewer new international degree students at research universities in 2022-23**

Whereas new international enrolments on RU bachelor's programmes increased this year (20,727, +917), RU master's programmes received considerably fewer new international enrolments than in 2021-22 (17,648, -1,734). This translates to an overall decrease in new international enrolments at research universities (38,375, -690; see Figure 3). Universities of applied sciences on the other hand saw an absolute increase in new international enrolments compared to 2021-22 (12,501, +909).

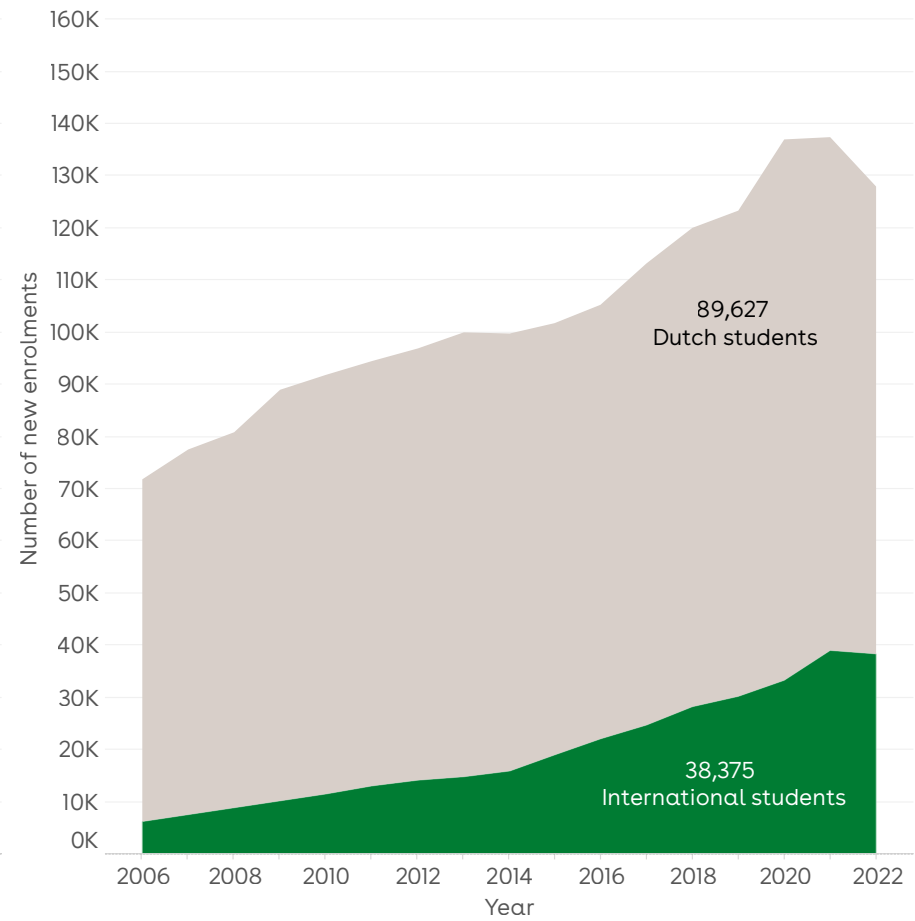


**Figure 3.** Number of new Dutch and international degree student enrolments per year by type of institution (2006-07 to 2022-23)

**UAS New Enrolments**



**RU New Enrolments**





### **Increases across the board in relative share of new enrolments from international students**

Both universities of applied sciences (UAS) and research universities (RU) saw an increase in the proportion of new enrolments that was international. International degree students accounted for 9.1% of all new enrolments on UAS programmes this year, up from 8.1% in the academic year 2021-22. The share of new international enrolments on RU programmes also increased in the same period, from 28.4% to 30%, despite the fact that fewer new international students enrolled this year. This is due to the even steeper decline in the absolute number of Dutch new enrolments, causing the relative share of international new enrolments to increase (see Figure 3).

### **Current development 2: (Re)introduction of the basic grant for students**

In February 2022, the Dutch Lower House of Parliament (*Tweede Kamer*) voted unanimously to bring back the government-funded grant for students, which had previously been scrapped in 2014. It is likely that the reintroduction of the basic grant (*basisbeurs*) will be approved by the Upper House of Parliament (*Senaat*) in July 2023.

All Dutch students starting their studies in September 2023 will receive €110.30 per month if living at home and €274.90 per month if living on their own. Students are eligible to receive a supplementary grant (up to €401.34 per month depending on

income) if their parents' annual income is less than €70,000. This threshold has been raised from €53,900 due to inflation. Dutch students who started their studies in September 2022 will be able to receive the basic grant from their second year onwards. Students do not have to pay back the grant, provided they graduate within 10 years.

International degree students from the European Economic Area (EEA) studying in the Netherlands will also be eligible for the basic grant if they work at least 56 hours per month. Questions were raised in the Lower House of Parliament concerning the possibility of EEA students applying for student finance in the Netherlands as well as in their own country. Minister Dijkgraaf (education) informed the House that privacy laws might prevent effective checks, but that he intends to raise the issue of double funding in Brussels. Another concern was that the eligibility threshold of €70,000 might be considered a middle income in the Netherlands, but a high income in other EU countries. Minister Dijkgraaf will also look into this.



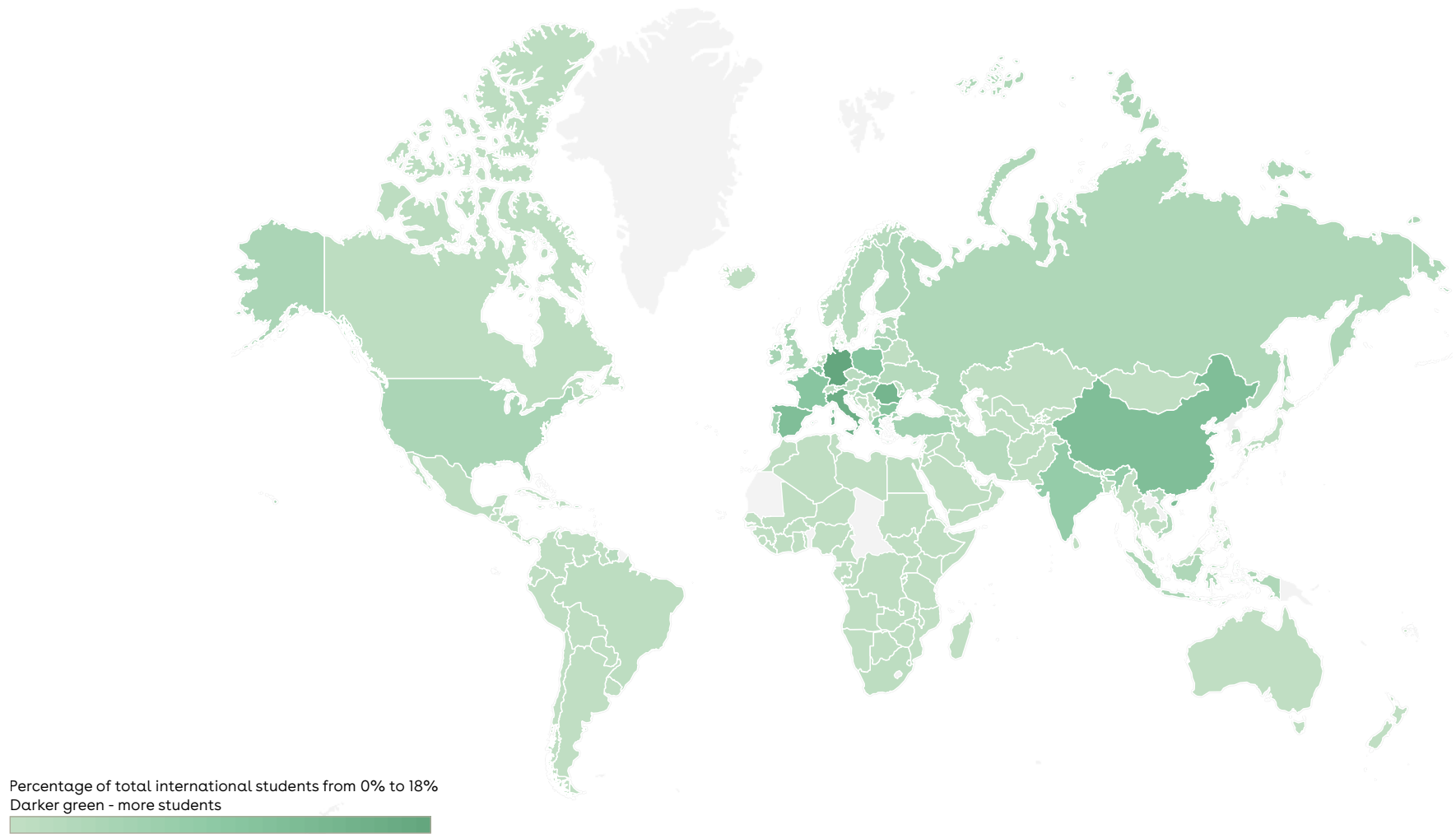
## 3. Countries of origin

- 3.1 Spotlight on Germany, the United Kingdom and Ukraine 20
- 3.2 Non-EEA countries 25





**Figure 4.** Countries of origin of international degree students in Dutch higher education in 2022-23





### More than 70% of incoming degree students from the EEA

In the academic year 2022-23, students from 167 different countries were studying for a degree in the Netherlands<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 4). This is three countries fewer than in 2020 and 2021. The vast majority of international degree students are from countries within the European Economic Area (EEA). In 2022-23, there are 88,265 international degree students from the EEA. In total they account for 72.3% of all international degree students, a similar share to last year (72.6%). This year, there are 33,816 international degree students from outside the EEA, accounting for 27.7% of the international degree student population in the Netherlands (see Figure 5).

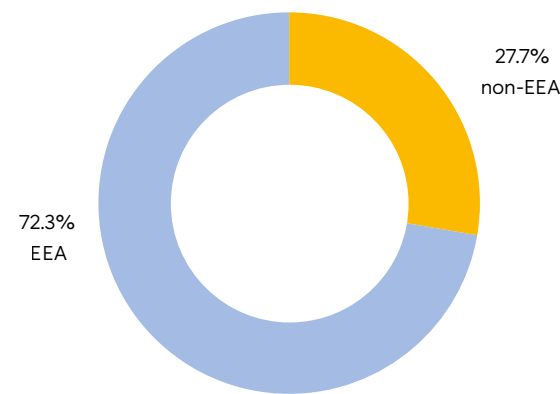


#### European Economic Area (EEA)

The EEA comprises all 27 countries in the European Union (EU), plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. This group no longer includes the United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> The country of origin was unavailable for 206 international degree students.

**Figure 5.** Percentage of non-EEA and EEA international degree students pursuing a full degree in the Netherlands

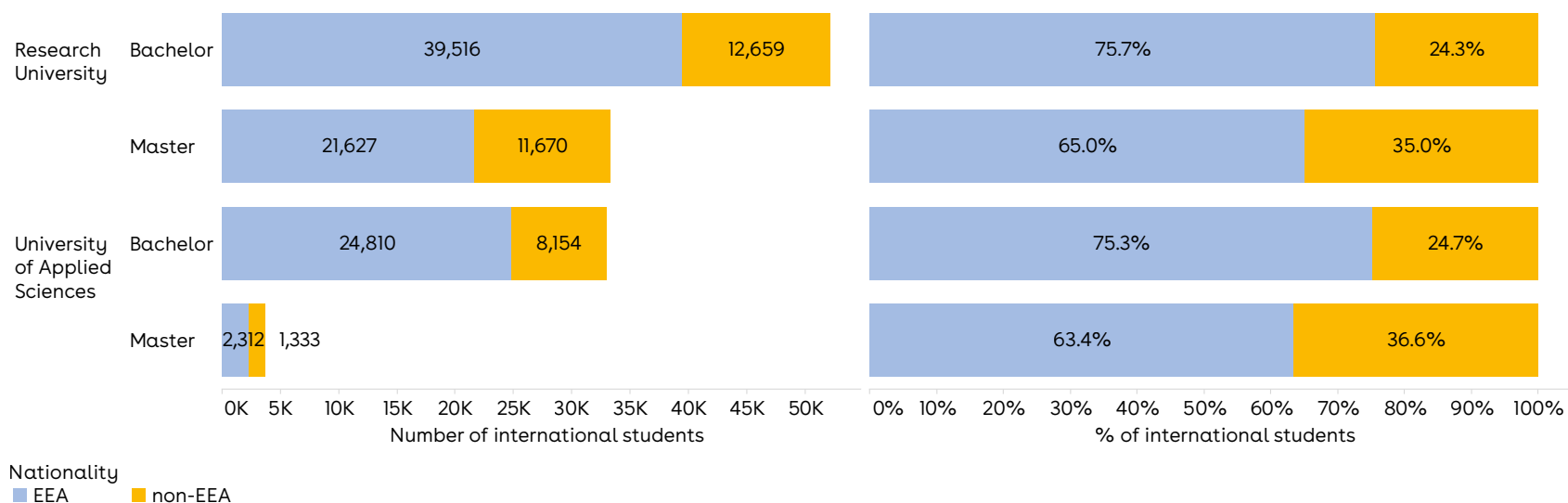


### Increasing share of non-EEA students at master's level

Master's programmes remained a relatively more popular choice than bachelor's programmes amongst students from outside the EEA. Figure 6 shows that about a third of the international degree students enrolled on RU and UAS master's programmes in 2022-23 were from outside the EEA. At bachelor's level, about a quarter of the international degree students came from countries outside the EEA. Compared to 2021-22, the relative share of non-EEA international degree students at universities of applied sciences increased slightly. At research universities, this was only the case at master's level. UAS master's programmes saw their share of non-EEA degree students increase the most, from 33.5% of the international student population last year to 36.6% in 2022-23.



**Figure 6.** International degree students in the Netherlands by institution type, degree, and nationality (EEA or non-EEA) in 2022-23 (in total numbers and in percentages)



### Top 3 countries of origin once again exclusively EEA

2021-22 was the first year that the top 3 most common countries of origin for international degree students comprised only EEA countries. This year, the top 3 remains unchanged: Germany (22,775 students), Italy (7,633), and Romania (6,717; see Figures 7 and 8). In contrast to the declining number of international degree students from Germany (-7.1%; see section 3.1 below), both Italy (+6%) and Romania (+19.1%) had more degree students

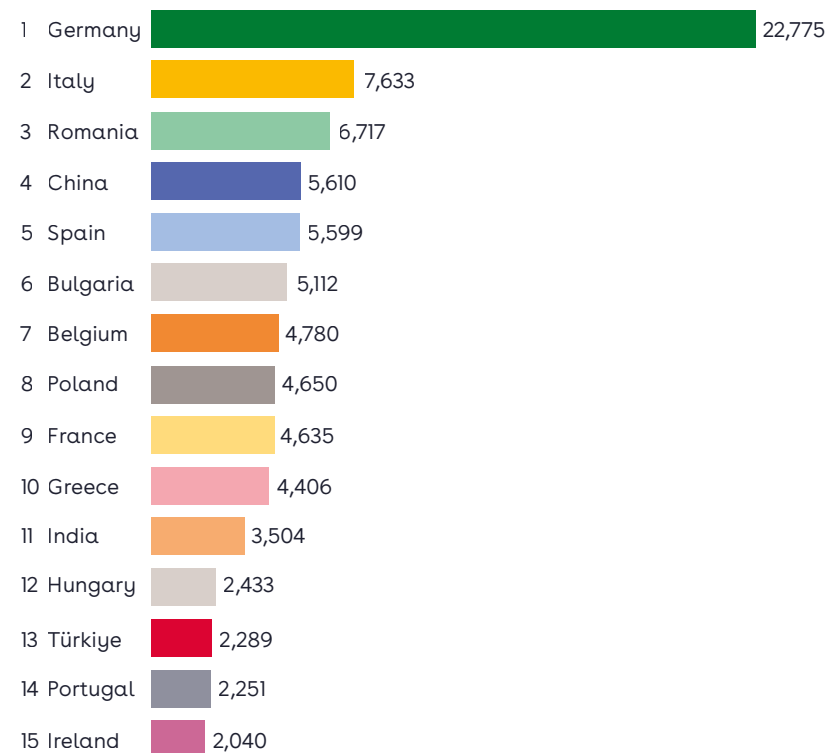
studying in the Netherlands in 2022-23 than the year before. Since 2021-22, China is the only remaining non-EEA country in the top 10 (4<sup>th</sup> place) with 5,610 students. The Chinese degree student population in the Netherlands grew by 5.3% in 2022-23.



### Belgium replaced by Spain in top 5

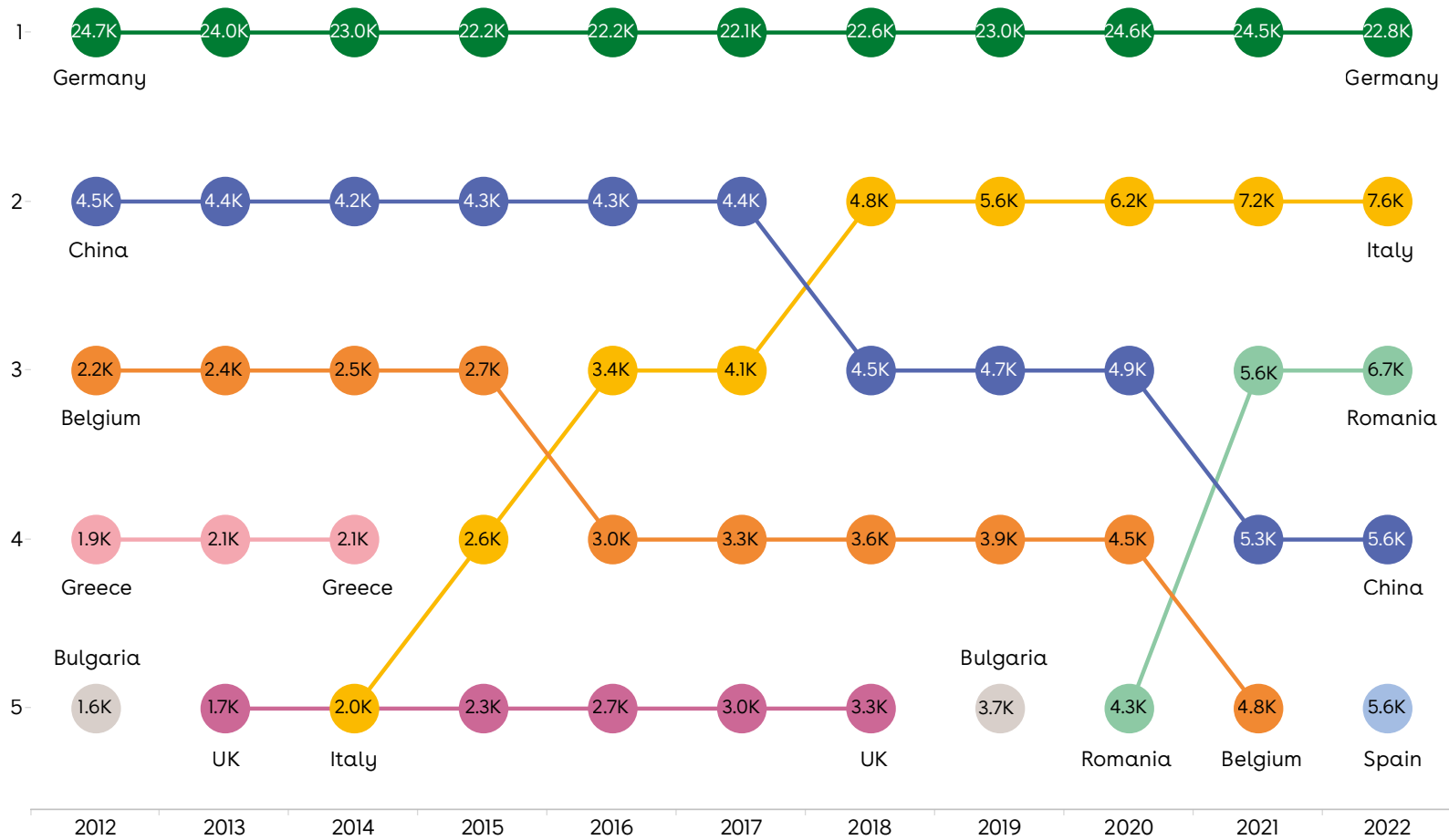
For the first time ever, the top 5 countries of origin for international degree students in the Netherlands does not include neighbouring Belgium (see Figure 8). While the number of Belgian students dropped slightly relative to last year, 2022-23 saw a notable rise in degree-seeking students from Spain: 19.4% more than in 2021-22 (+910). With 5,599 Spanish students pursuing a full degree in the Netherlands, Spain is now the 5<sup>th</sup> largest country of origin. Steady growth from Bulgaria also allowed it to overtake Belgium this year, leaving the latter in 7<sup>th</sup> place.

**Figure 7.** Top 15 countries of origin for international degree students studying in the Netherlands in 2022-23





**Figure 8.** Change over time in the top 5 countries of origin for international degree students (2006-2022), with approximate yearly totals per country





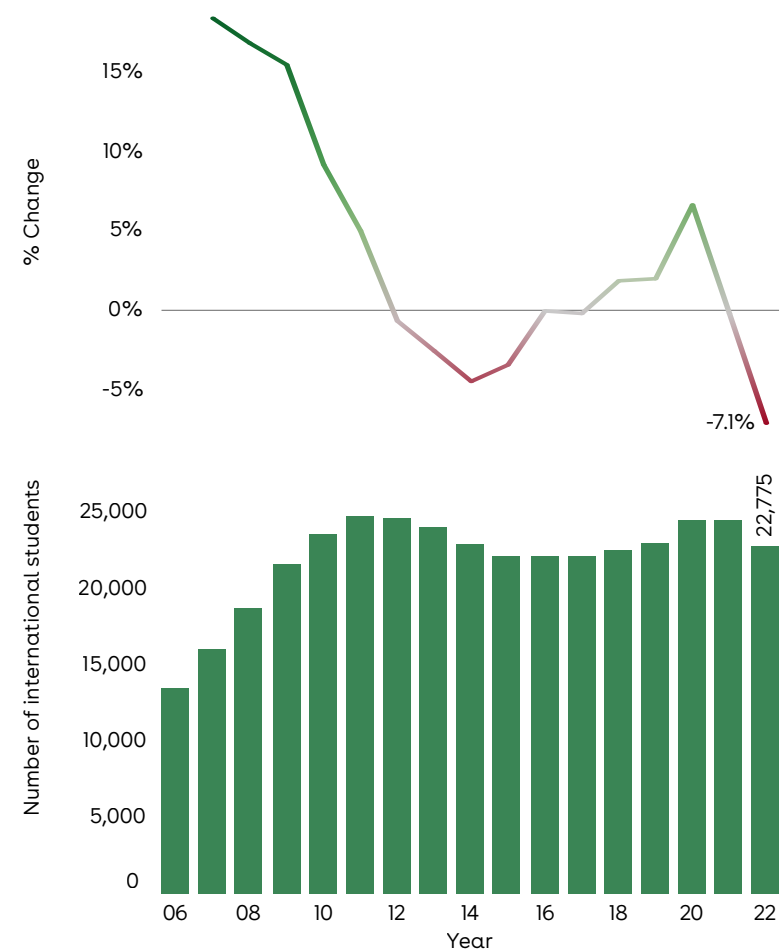
### 3.1 Spotlight on Germany, the United Kingdom and Ukraine

#### Fewer German students choosing to study in the Netherlands

Although neighbouring Germany is still the most common country of origin for international degree students by a considerable margin, there were 1,732 fewer German students in Dutch higher education this year compared to 2021-22 (-7.1%). This is the sharpest year-on-year decrease Germany has seen since 2006. One factor that may contribute to the decline in numbers is a change to the law in Germany concerning how psychotherapists are trained (see Current development 3). This is likely to have implications for German degree students choosing to study Psychology across the border.

Note: The green bars below show the absolute numbers per year and the line above shows the year-on-year change (%). When the line is above 0%, it means that the number of international degree students increased that year compared to the year before. When the line is below 0%, the number of students fell compared to the previous year.

Figure 9. Trends in incoming degree mobility from Germany (2006-07 to 2022-23)





### **Current development 3: New training requirements for psychotherapists in Germany**

In September 2020, the law in Germany concerning the training of psychotherapists changed, with significant consequences for German students studying psychology outside Germany. Qualifying as a psychotherapist in Germany previously required a specialised course after the master's, which concluded with a state exam. Now, specialisation will be built in to psychology bachelor's and master's programmes. As well as gaining practical experience during their bachelor's or master's degree, psychology students in Germany will be allowed to take the state exam earlier.

In the past, students were entitled to specialise as a psychotherapist in Germany with a wide variety of bachelor's and master's degrees, including some from the Netherlands. Due to changed rules, it is not clear whether students who have studied psychology in Netherlands will be able to meet the German training requirements for psychotherapists or be allowed to take the state exam. This may deter some German school leavers who are interested in a career in psychotherapy from pursuing a study programme abroad, including in the Netherlands.



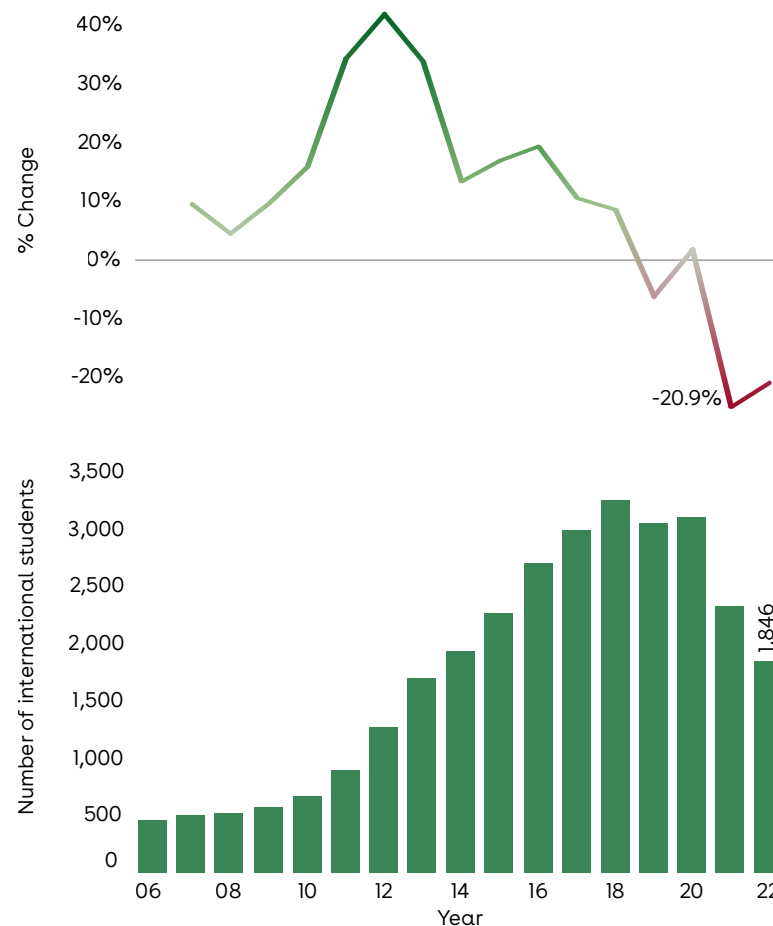
### UK student population in the Netherlands continues to shrink post Brexit

Since the United Kingdom completed its withdrawal from the European Union (EU) in January 2021, incoming degree mobility from the UK has declined rapidly (see Figure 10 and Current development 4). There were 1,846 degree students from the UK in 2022-23, 20.9% fewer than in 2021-2022 (-487). In the two years since Brexit, the UK student population in the Netherlands has reduced by 42.4%. The UK is now the 17<sup>th</sup> most common country of origin for international degree students in the Netherlands (just behind the United States and ahead of Lithuania). In 2020-21, prior to exiting the EU, the UK held 10<sup>th</sup> place.

#### Current development 4: Implications of Brexit for degree mobility from the UK

Since the implementation of Brexit on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021, British nationals wishing to study in the Netherlands face new regulations. Under the terms of the withdrawal agreement, UK degree students already studying in the Netherlands on this date are entitled to continue paying statutory tuition fees and have access to student finance until they graduate. However, those arriving after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 are considered non-EEA students, meaning that they pay higher institution fees and have no access to student finance. Incoming UK degree students must also apply for a study visa, but do not require an entry permit (*machtiging tot voorlopig verblijf*).

Figure 10. Trends in incoming degree mobility from the UK (2006-07 to 2022-23)





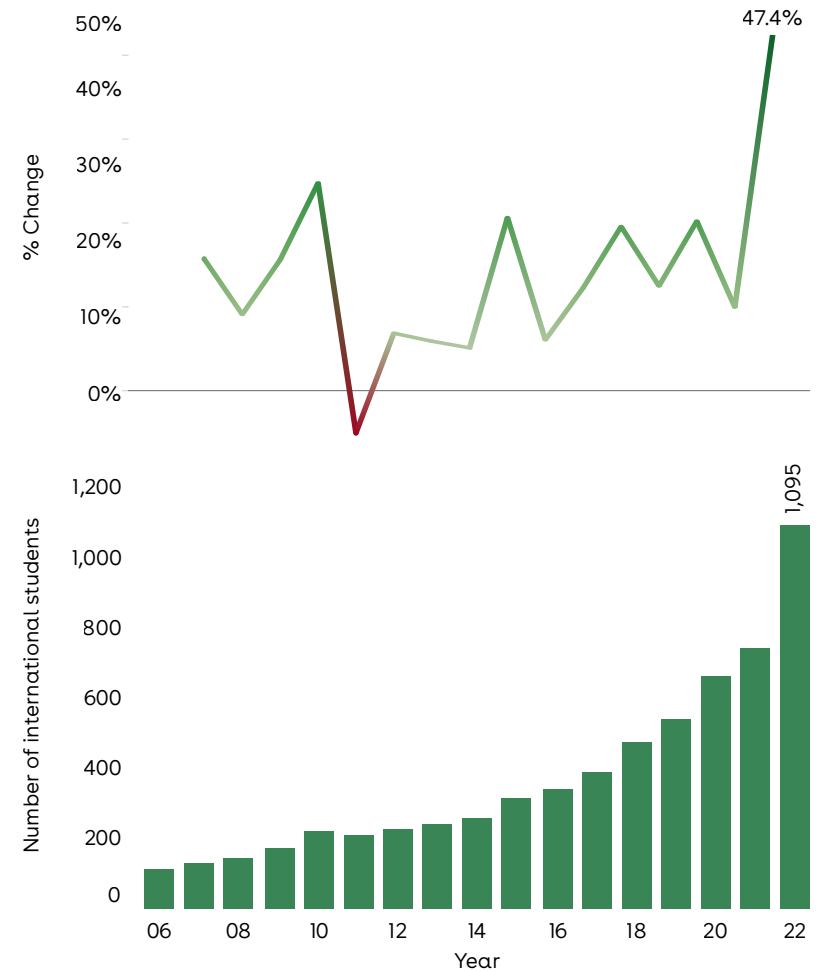
### Nearly 50% more Ukrainian students enrolled in 2022-23

While the number of degree-seeking students from Ukraine has been increasing steadily since 2006, the effect of the war in Ukraine on incoming mobility is clearly visible in the data (see Figure 11 and Current development 5). In 2022-23, the first full academic year since war broke out in February 2022, there are 1,095 Ukrainian degree students enrolled at institutions of higher education in the Netherlands. This amounts to a 47.4% increase relative to 2021-22 (+352 students).

Just over half of the incoming Ukrainian degree students in 2022-23 is enrolled on a UAS bachelor's programme (52.5%). Around one third (34.6%) is studying for an RU bachelor's degree, and 1 in 10 for an RU master's degree (11.1%). Very few students from Ukraine are enrolled on a UAS master's programme.

Ukrainian degree students most frequently study in the provinces of South Holland (26.9%) and North Holland (19%). Utrecht, Limburg and Zeeland have the fewest students from Ukraine.

**Figure 11.** Trends in incoming degree mobility from Ukraine (2006-07 to 2022-23)





### **Current development 5: Arrangements for students fleeing the war in Ukraine**

On 24th February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. The European Commission (EC) issued a Temporary Protection Directive (*Richtlijn Tijdelijke Bescherming*) under which people from Ukraine could claim refuge in the Netherlands from March 2022 onwards. Among them were many foreigners and refugees who had been studying or working in Ukraine, known as third country citizens. Third country students with refugee status in Ukraine remain welcome in the Netherlands under the Temporary Protection Directive. Third country students without refugee status in Ukraine must apply for asylum to remain in the Netherlands as refugees. Under the Temporary Protection Directive, Ukrainian students are permitted to study and work in the Netherlands without restriction (as non-EEA students, they would normally have been limited to working 16 hours per week or 3 months during the summer).

As the general secondary education diploma from Ukraine enables students to gain entry to universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands, most Ukrainian students are enrolled on UAS programmes. For the year 2022-23, both universities of applied sciences and research universities agreed to reduce tuition fees for students from Ukraine. Universities of applied sciences have prolonged this policy. Research universities will decide individually whether they will maintain the lower tuition fees.

**Under the Temporary Protection Directive, Ukrainian students are permitted to study and work in the Netherlands without restriction.**



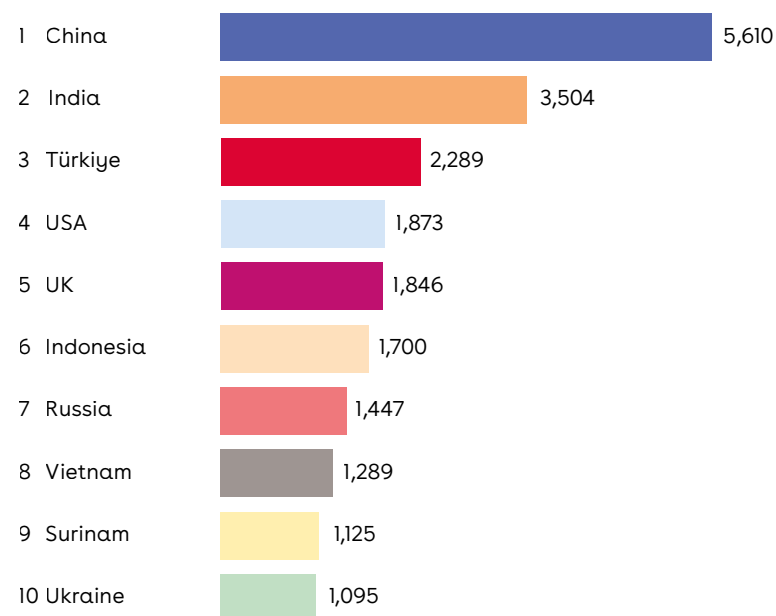


## 3.2 Non-EEA countries

### 9 of top 10 non-EEA countries of origin show growth compared to 2021-22

With 5,610 degree students in Dutch higher education, China is the most common country of origin outside of the EEA by a considerable margin (Figure 12). India follows with 3,504 degree students. Türkiye now ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> (2,289) the USA 4<sup>th</sup> (1,873), both having overtaken the UK since Brexit. New in the top 10 non-EEA countries this year is Ukraine, which overtook South-Korea to gain 10<sup>th</sup> place. With the exception of the UK, all of the top 10 non-EEA countries have more international degree students in the Netherlands in 2022-23 compared to the year before.

**Figure 12.** Top 10 non-EEA countries of origin for international degree students studying in the Netherlands in 2022-23



For more detailed information on all countries, see our [dashboard](#) on countries of origin.



## 4. Fields of study

- 4.1 Universities of applied sciences 27
- 4.2 Research universities 28





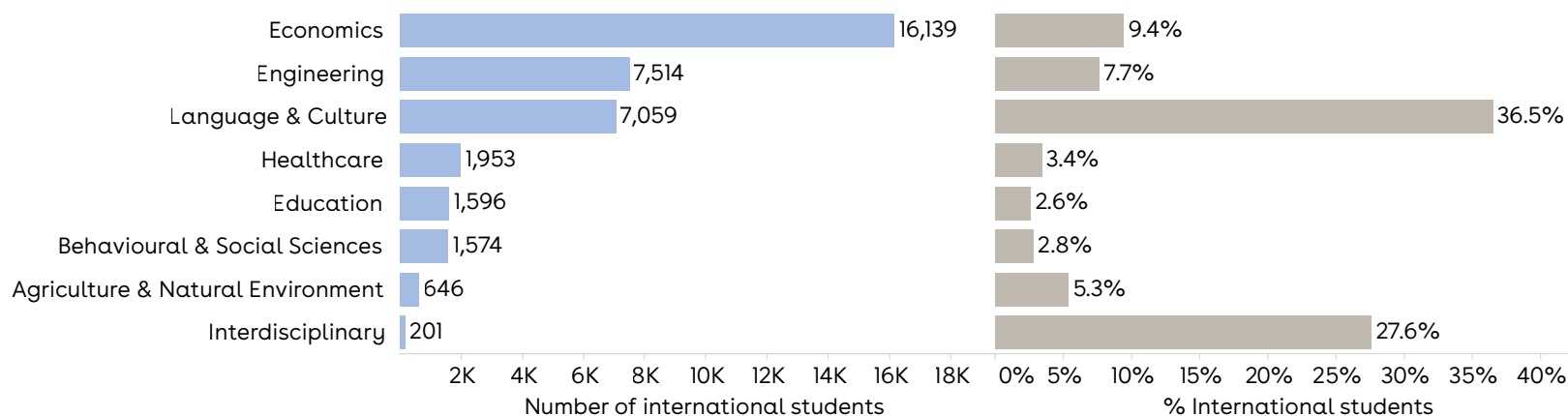
## 4.1 Universities of applied sciences

### Engineering the fastest growing field of study

As in all previous years, Economics is by far the most popular field of study for international degree students at universities of applied sciences in absolute terms (see Figure 13). Almost 1 in 10 UAS Economics students (9.4%) is now international, up from 8.6% in 2021-22. Engineering now ranks second in absolute terms, ahead of Language & Culture. Of all UAS fields of study, Engineering saw the largest year-on-year increase in international student numbers (+16%).

In relative terms, however, Language & Culture remains the most international field of study, with more than 1 in 3 students coming from abroad. Behavioural & Social Sciences (2.8%) and Education (2.6%) have the lowest percentages of international degree students.

**Figure 13.** International degree students at universities of applied sciences (total number and share) per field of study (2022-23)





## 4.2 Research universities

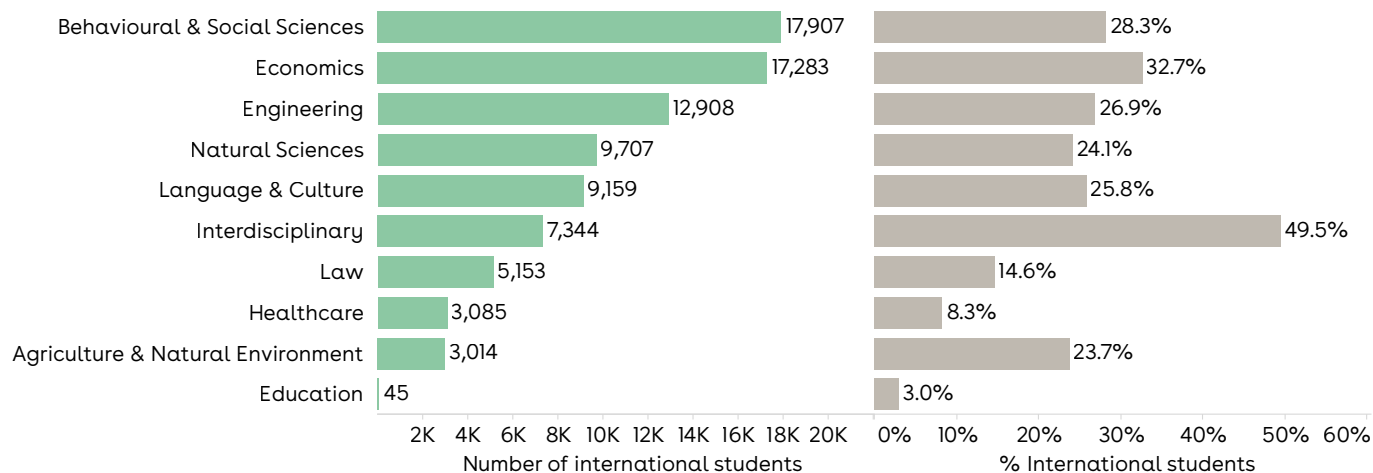
### Behavioural & Social Sciences, Economics, and Engineering attract the most international degree students

At research universities, the field of Behavioural & Social Sciences attracts the largest number of international degree students, followed by Economics and Engineering (see Figure 14). While almost all RU fields of study have more international degree students compared to last year, Natural Sciences has seen the fastest growth (+17.7%).

Engineering also shows remarkable growth with +12.4%. Similarly to previous years, Interdisciplinary studies have the largest share of international degree students (now at 49.5%, up from 46.3% in 2021-22). As at universities of applied sciences, Healthcare (8.3%) and Education (3%) are amongst the least international fields of study.

For more detailed information, see our [dashboard](#) on fields of study

**Figure 14.** International degree students at research universities (total number and share) per field of study (2022-23)



Note: The fields of Natural Sciences and Law are only offered at research universities.



# 5. Study programmes

5.1 Universities of applied sciences	30
5.2 Research universities	31





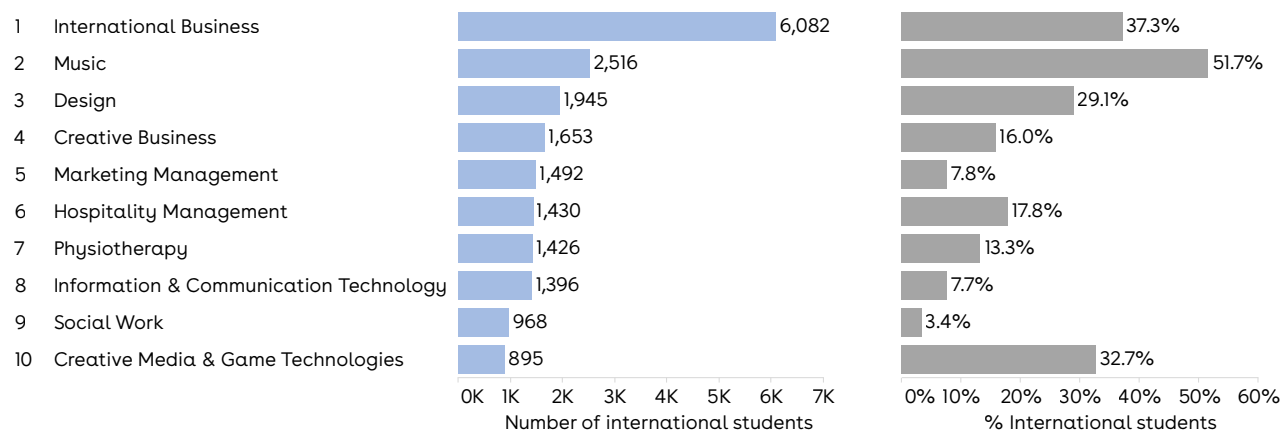
## 5.1 Universities of applied sciences

### 1 in 6 international degree students at UAS studying International Business

International Business remains the most popular UAS study programme by far amongst international degree students, with more than 6,000 enrolled (see Figure 15). This is roughly equivalent to 1 in 6 international degree students at universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands. Of all UAS International Business students, about one third is international (37.3%). The second largest UAS study programme for international degree students is Music (2,516). Notably, more than half of all Music students are international (51.7%).

Design completes the top 3 with 1,945 international degree students enrolled, accounting for 29.1% of all UAS Design students. A new and fast-growing addition to the top 10 UAS study programmes this year is Creative Media and Game Technologies. In 2022-23 there are 895 international degree students enrolled on this programme, 32.2% more than last year. Around 1 in 3 Creative Media and Game Technologies students is international. UAS study programmes not featured in the absolute top 10 which are nevertheless highly international include Fine Art & Design (80.9% international), International Supply Chain Management (68.4%), and International Teacher Education for Primary Schools (67.4%)<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 15.** Top 10 study programmes among international degree students at universities of applied sciences in terms of absolute numbers (2022-23)



<sup>4</sup> Only study programmes with at least 100 students enrolled are taken into consideration.



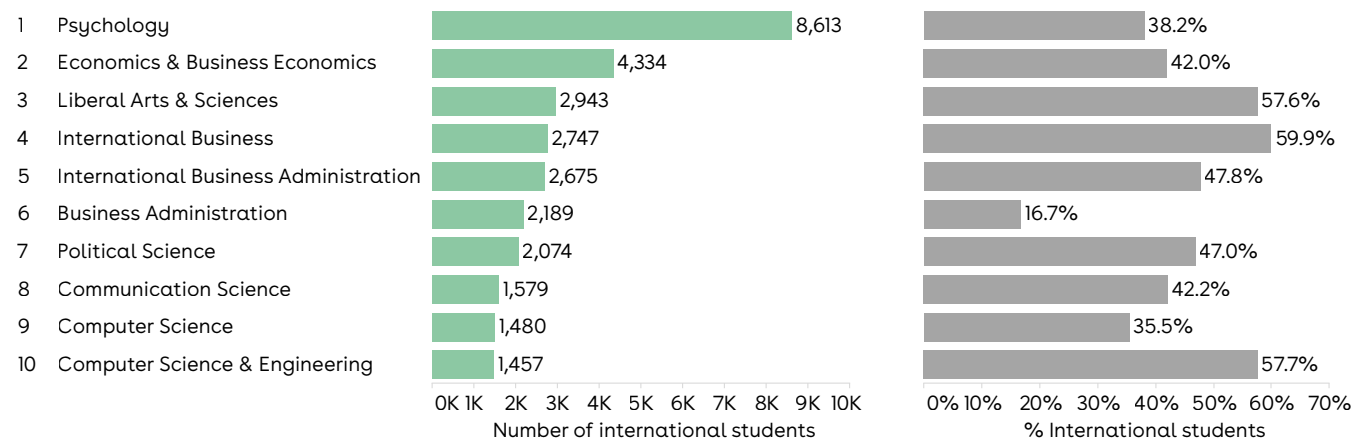
## 5.2 Research universities

### Psychology still the number one RU study programme among international degree students

Psychology leads the top 10 RU study programmes by a considerable margin, with approximately twice as many international degree students (8,613) as the second most popular programme, Economics and Business Economics (4,334). About 2 in 5 of all students enrolled on these study programmes are international (see Figure 16). Liberal Arts & Sciences completes the top 3 with 2,943 international degree students, accounting for over half of all students enrolled. The top 10 includes of

3 study programmes where more than half of the students are international; International Business (59.9%), Computer Science & Engineering (57.7%) and Liberal Arts & Sciences (57.6%).

**Figure 16.** Top 10 study programmes among international degree students at research universities in terms of absolute numbers (2022-23)







### **Growing popularity of Computer Science programmes**

Two new study programmes entered the top 10 this year: Computer Science in 9<sup>th</sup> place (1,480 international degree students), followed by Computer Science & Engineering in 10<sup>th</sup> place (1,457). Both of these programmes are growing fast, with 38.2% (Computer Science) and 19.9% (Computer Science and Engineering) more international degree students enrolled than in 2021-22.

Taking a broader look at all RU study programmes with a minimum of 100 students enrolled, those with the largest relative shares of international degree students in 2022-23 are Data Science for Decision Making (87.9%), followed by Globalisation and Law (86.2%) and Digital Society (85.4%).





## 6. Dutch higher education institutions





There is considerable variation in both the total number and share of international degree students across higher education institutions in the Netherlands. Below, we highlight the most important findings.

### **University of Amsterdam maintains largest number of international degree students**

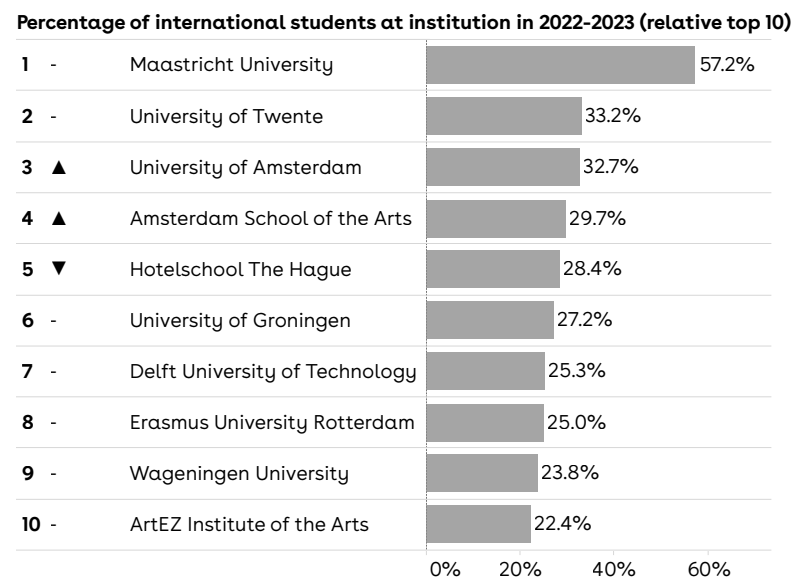
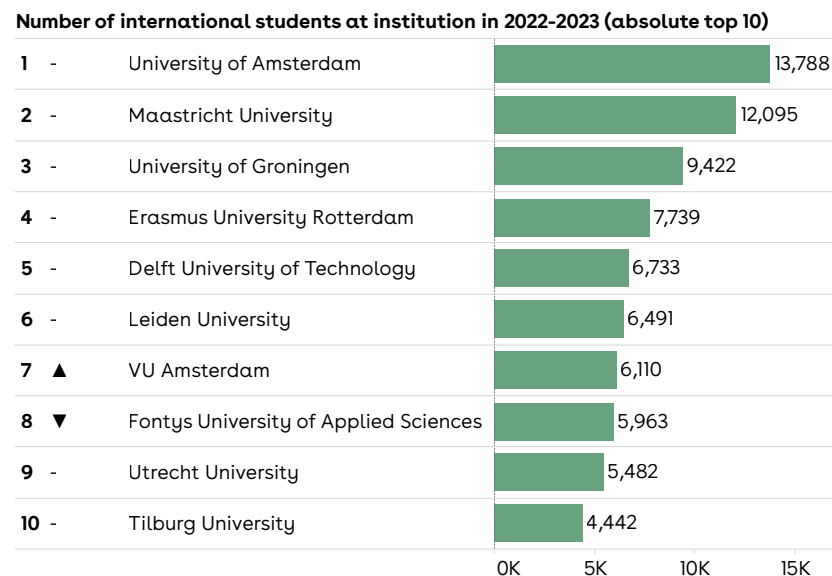
As shown in Figure 17, the University of Amsterdam has the largest number of international degree students (13,788) out of all Dutch public higher education institutions. This has been the case since 2021-22. Maastricht University (12,096) and the University of Groningen (9,422) complete the top 3 in absolute terms. The only change in the absolute top 10 compared to last year is that VU Amsterdam now has the 7<sup>th</sup> largest number of international degree students (6,110), having overtaken Fontys University of Applied Sciences (5,963). Of all institutions in the top 10, Utrecht University (5,482) saw the biggest year-on-year increase in percentage terms (+15%).

### **57% of all students international at Maastricht University**

Maastricht University remains the institution with the largest share of international degree students, with over half of its student population coming from abroad in 2022-23. This has been the case for the past 7 years. At the University of Twente and the University of Amsterdam, in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place respectively, around 1 in 3 students is international (see Figure 17). Hotelschool The Hague this year dropped from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> place, having been overtaken by the University of Amsterdam and Amsterdam School of the Arts. In 2022-23, 28.4% of the students at Hotelschool The Hague are international, compared to 30.8% last year.

For more detailed information, see our [dashboard](#) on regions and universities.

**Figure 17.** International degree students in Dutch higher education, top 10 institutions (2022-23)



### International degree students in the majority at art schools

The fine arts institutions are discussed separately because they are permitted by law to set additional entry requirements<sup>5</sup>. For example, prospective students may be accepted onto fine arts programmes based on their portfolio and entry level.

Note: Only institutions with more than 2,000 enrolled students are included in the top 10. Symbols indicate a higher (▲), lower (▼), or unchanged (-) ranking relative to the academic year 2021-22.

<sup>5</sup> Wet op het Hoger onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, Article 7.26a



The majority of fine arts students in the Netherlands are international. With almost 80% of its student population coming from abroad, Design Academy has the largest share of international degree students (79.6%). The University of Arts, The Hague (67.2%) and Gerrit Rietveld Academy (65.1%) follow with approximately 2 in 3 students international. At Codarts, international degree students account for more than half of the total (53.8%). Amsterdam School of Arts follows with a share of 29.7% international degree students, and at ArtEZ Institute of the Arts 22.4% of the students are international. The relative share of international degree students at all art schools has increased since last year.

#### **Current development 6: Government announces new measures to regulate incoming degree mobility**

In December 2022, Minister Dijkgraaf requested that higher education institutions stop actively recruiting international degree students abroad, with some exceptions, such as in sectors where there are skills shortages.

In late April 2023, Minister Dijkgraaf informed parliament of his intention to introduce measures to regulate incoming degree mobility. These include, but are not limited to, the option for Dutch higher education institutions to limit the number of enrolments on English-taught tracks at bachelor's level, and an 'emergency cap' that can be applied in the case of an unforeseen spike in applications from non-EEA students.

Requirements for international students to learn Dutch will also be expanded, and there will be stricter enforcement of the existing criteria that permit institutions to offer a given study programme in a language other than Dutch. The proposed measures will be debated in parliament on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

Further details of these plans are expected to be announced in June 2023 as part of the Minister's vision for the future of secondary vocational education, higher education, and research in the Netherlands. This document (*toekomstverkenning middelbaar beroepsonderwijs, hoger onderwijs en wetenschap*) will address the topic of internationalisation in relation to fundamental questions about the inflow of students, further development of the UAS/RU binary system, the labour market, funding of the higher education system, legislation, and government oversight.



## 7. Regional differences



The data below represent the province in which students are enrolled, and not where they live. The place of enrolment is based on the official main location of each institution according to DUO.

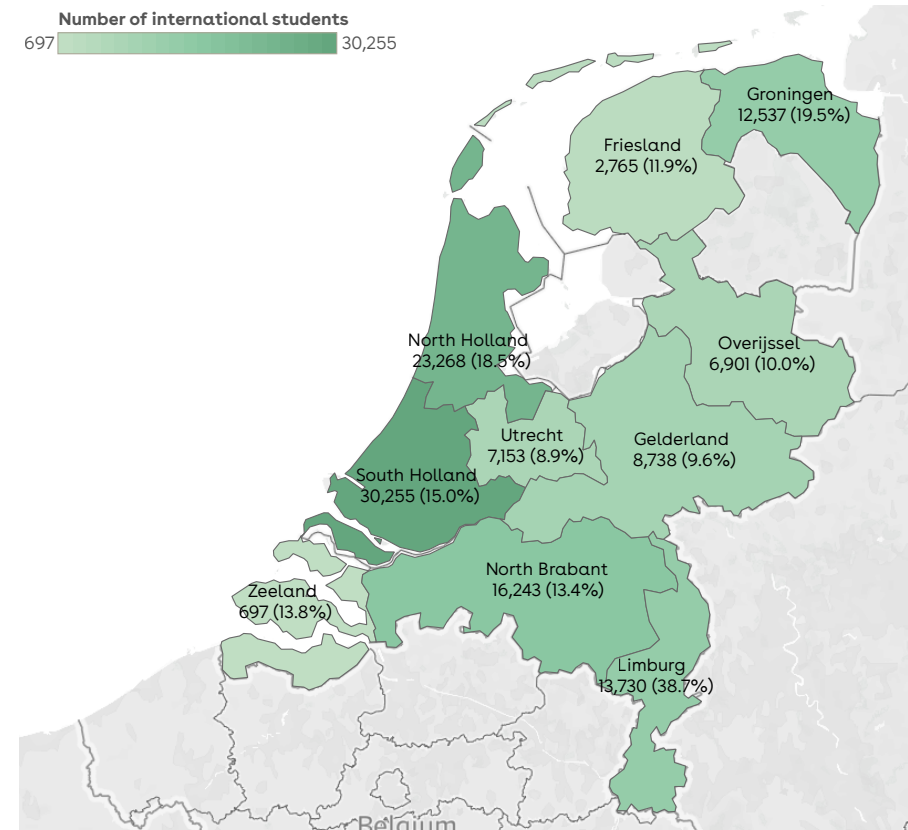
### South Holland still the most international province in the Netherlands

At a provincial level, South Holland has the most international degree students enrolled, with 30,255 in 2022-23. North Holland (23,268) and North Brabant (16,243) complete the top 3 (see Figure 18). The province with the largest relative share of international degree students, however, is Limburg, where 38.7% of all higher education students are international. Groningen is the second most international province (19.5%), followed by North Holland (18.5%).

### City of Groningen now has the second largest international degree student population

Zooming in on the cities in the Netherlands where international degree students are enrolled (see Figure 19), Amsterdam has the largest international student population by a considerable margin (23,268). The city of Groningen overtook Maastricht to 2<sup>nd</sup> place this year, with 12,537 international students pursuing a full degree there. Almost all cities in Figure 19 have seen an increase in the absolute number of international degree students enrolled relative to 2021-22. Only in Heerlen and Enschede did the number of international degree students drop slightly.

**Figure 18.** Total number and share of international degree students enrolled per province in 2022-23







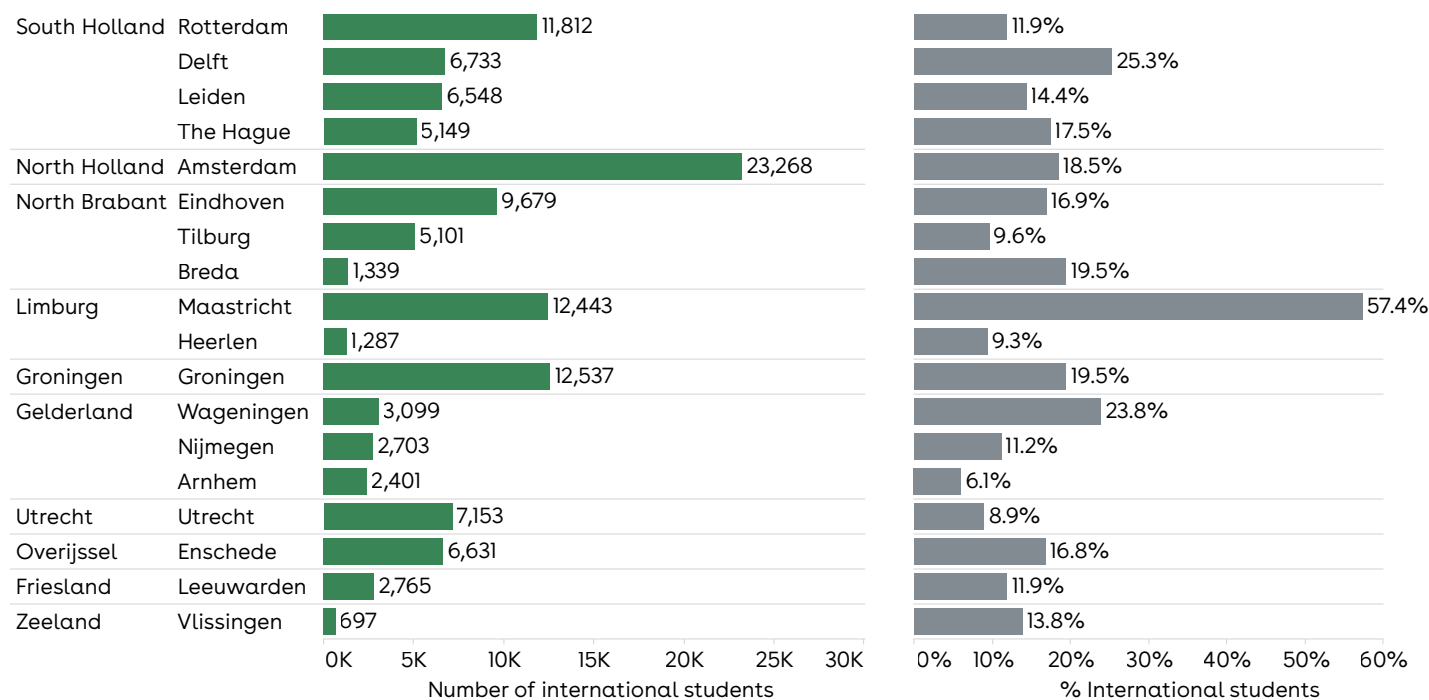
### Maastricht remains the most international Dutch city in relative terms

Almost 60% of the students in Maastricht are international, making it the city with the largest relative share of international degree students in the Netherlands. Delft comes second with over a quarter of its degree student population from outside

the Netherlands (25.3%), followed by Wageningen (23.8%). The relative share of international degree students has increased in all cities compared to 2021-22.

For more detailed information, see our [dashboard](#) on regions and universities.

**Figure 19.** Total number and share of international degree students enrolled per city in 2022-23



Note: Cities with fewer than 500 international degree students are not shown in this figure.



## 8. Language of instruction at research universities





Although the language in which degree programmes are taught is not centrally registered, Universities of the Netherlands (UNL) collects this information from research universities. Here we present the latest available data from 2021-22 for RU programmes only, as the equivalent information for universities of applied sciences is not available in recent form.

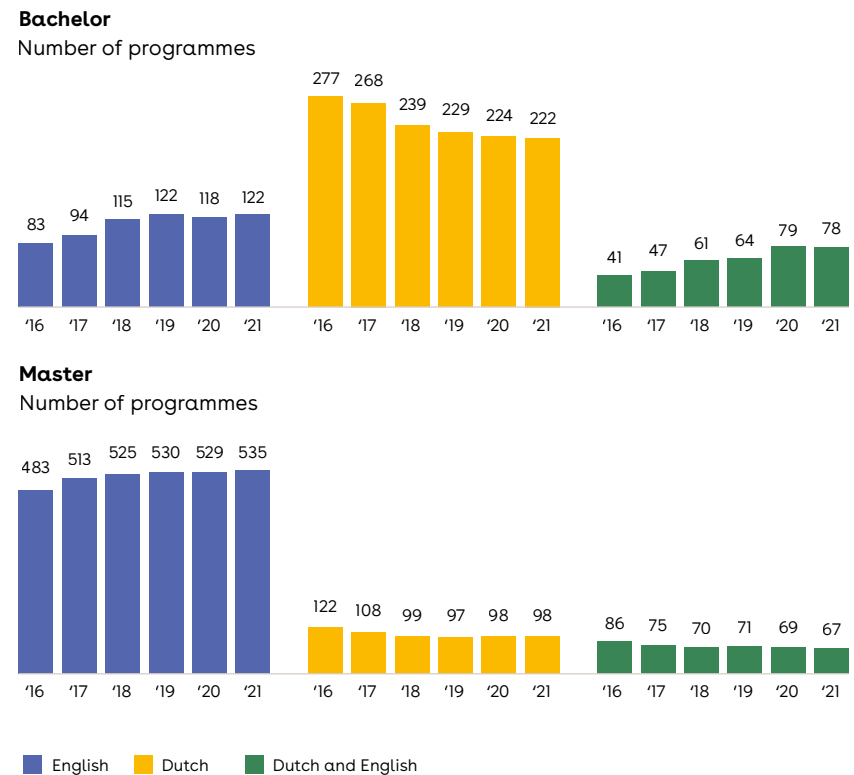
### Number of English-only bachelor's programmes stable since 2018

As shown in Figure 20, the majority of university bachelor's programmes have been offered in Dutch for the past 6 years. In the academic year 2021-22, 222 unique bachelor's programmes were taught only in Dutch, 122 only in English and 78 were provided in both languages. While the number of programmes offered exclusively in Dutch has declined slightly over the past few years, the number of English-only bachelor's programmes has been relatively stable since 2018.

### Most research university master's programmes taught only in English

At RU master's level, English-taught programmes have been the norm for a number of years. In the academic year 2021-22, 535 unique master's programmes were offered exclusively in English, whereas 98 were taught only through Dutch. A further 67 programmes were offered in both languages. As Figure 20 shows, these numbers have remained relatively stable since 2019.

**Figure 20.** Number of unique<sup>6</sup> research university programmes offered in English, Dutch, and both languages over the period 2016-2021



6 By unique study programme we mean a specific programme taught at a specific university. For example, when a programme with the same name is taught at three different universities, these are counted as three unique study programmes.

# Conclusion



## **Growth in international degree student population slows to 7%**

For the first time since 2016, year-on-year growth in the total number of international degree students in the Netherlands is in single digits. The international degree student population grew by 7% in 2022-23, compared to 12% in 2021-22. This year there are 122,287 internationals in total, accounting for 15% of all degree students enrolled in Dutch higher education.

## **Number of new international enrolments stabilises**

50,876 new international students enrolled in Dutch higher education for the academic year 2022-23, a marginal increase relative to 2021-22. At the same time, the number of new enrolments from Dutch students fell by 6%. The expected reintroduction of the basic student grant in the academic year 2023-24 may explain this decrease.

## **Declining popularity of research university master's programmes**

Overall, research universities received 2% fewer new enrolments from international students compared to the previous academic year. RU master's programmes saw the steepest drop in new international students (-9%). Universities of applied sciences, on the other hand, received 8% more new international enrolments than in 2021-22.

## **Engineering fastest growing field of study**

In total, 20,422 international degree students studied Engineering in 2022-23, making it the fastest growing field of study at universities of applied sciences (+16%) and the second fastest at research universities (+12%). The Engineering programmes Information & Communication Technology (UAS) and Computer Science (RU) now rank in the top 10 most popular study programmes amongst international degree students.

## **Almost 50% more Ukrainian degree students**

The impact of the war in Ukraine on incoming degree mobility is clearly visible in the current data. There were 1,095 Ukrainian degree students in Dutch higher education in 2022-23, an increase of 47% compared to the previous year. Most of them studied for a bachelor's degree at a university of applied sciences (53%) or a research university (35%).

## **Incoming degree mobility from the UK down by 42% since Brexit**

In the two years since Brexit, the UK student population in the Netherlands has reduced by 42% to under 2,000 students. The UK is now the 17<sup>th</sup> most common country of origin for international degree students in the Netherlands. In 2020-21, prior to exiting the EU, the UK held 10<sup>th</sup> place.



### **University of Amsterdam continues to attract the most international degree students**

The University of Amsterdam has more international degree students than any other higher education institution in the Netherlands. This academic year there are 13,788 international students enrolled, accounting for about one third of its total student population. The University of Maastricht still has the largest relative share of international degree students, now at 57%.

### **City of Groningen now has the second largest degree student population after Amsterdam**

With 12,537 international degree students, Groningen overtook Maastricht in 2022-23 to become the second most international city in terms of absolute numbers. Amsterdam still has the largest international student population by a considerable margin, with over 23,000 international degree students.

NUF2023/05

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