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A PREPARATORY YEAR BEFORE ADMISSION TO A DUTCH UNIVERSITY

Who is this information leaflet for?

This leaflet has been written for international students who wish to follow a degree programme at a Dutch higher education institution (either a university or a university of applied sciences *(hogeschool)*), but who are not yet eligible for admission to the programme of their choice.

Before being accepted to a study programme, international students must meet the admission criteria of their chosen higher education institution. In many cases, one of the criteria is that you must have a certain level of competence in English or Dutch, depending on the language in which the study programme is taught. If you have not yet achieved the required level, you may get a conditional letter of acceptance from the higher education institution in response to your application. If this happens, Dutch immigration law allows you to come to the Netherlands for one year prior to your studies at a Dutch higher education institution in order to prepare yourself and pass the examinations set by the university.

What is a 'preparatory year' and where can I enrol for it?

A preparatory year allows you to prepare for a study programme at a Dutch higher Education institution. In most cases, the year will comprise language courses, but it may also include classes related to the subject matter of your chosen programme of study. For example, to enrol for an engineering programme, you might need to improve or brush up on your knowledge of mathematics. There are language schools in the Netherlands that offer specific training for international students in their preparatory year. Most of these are directly linked to a university. Your chosen higher education institution will most likely refer you to a school that offers preparatory courses in its own geographic region.

Do I already have to know the basics of the language or other preparatory subject?

Dutch immigration law allows for exactly twelve months of preparation. Once these twelve are up, you must meet the criteria that the Dutch higher education institution has set for you. The 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 embark on the preparatory year if you can reasonably expect to qualify for the required test at the end of the year. If you have no prior knowledge of the language or other preparatory subject at all, this will probably be very difficult to achieve.

Do I need a visa?

Whether you need a visa or a residence permit depends on your nationality. You should consult the websites listed below to see which immigration procedures would apply to you. Most of the students reading this leaflet would need to obtain a 'provisional residence permit' before coming to the Netherlands (in Dutch this is known as an *MVV* or *machtiging tot voorlopig verblijf*).

How does the immigration procedure work?

If you need an *MVV* and your host institution has made the necessary agreements with the IND, they will be able to apply for one on your behalf. This is called the 'fast-track procedure'. Until August 2008, you can alternatively still apply for an *MVV* yourself at the Dutch embassy or consulate in your home country or the country where you are legally residing. However, this procedure takes much longer and is more expensive.

Your provisional residence permit (*MVV*) will cost €250 if your Dutch host institution applies for it on your behalf, and the fee will be paid by automatic bank transfer. Otherwise the fee is €433. Paying the fee does not automatically mean that your application will be granted! The fee must be paid even if your application is turned down. You cannot be sure that your application for an *MVV* will be granted. For this reason, you are advised to wait until you have your *MVV* before you buy a ticket for your travel to the Netherlands.

When applying, you must be in possession of the following documents:

- a letter of conditional admission from a Dutch university or hogeschool that has signed the Code of Conduct (see www.internationalstudy.nl/Paginas/Search.asp), stating the exams they require you to pass before you can be admitted, as well as the study programme you will be admitted to and the date of admission, subject to a pass in the necessary exams;
- proof that you can support yourself financially (see: www.nuffic.nl/international-students/preparation-stay/preparing-your-stay/visa-and-permits/long/proof-that-you-can-support-yourself-financially);
- a valid passport.

When picking up your MVV, the embassy may ask you for a legalized birth certificate in addition to your passport as identification. It's advisable to make sure you have a **legalized** birth certificate ready, as you will quite likely be asked for it anyway after your arrival in Holland, when registering at the municipality.

You must allow ample time for the application process! From collecting the required documents to receiving your actual visa may take up to six months.

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

Yes, you can. However, for international students specific rules and restrictions apply, depending on your nationality. For students doing a preparatory year, the same rules apply as for students enrolled on a degree programme. If you want to know more about finding a job and what rules apply to you, you should read the factsheet 'International students and part-time jobs' (www.nuffic.nl/pdf/service/factsh/international_students.pdf).

Start your preparatory year in September!

Be sure to begin your preparatory year at the right time of the year. The best time for this is September as almost all degree programmes also start in September. You would then have exactly one year to prepare. Remember that you cannot extend your preparatory year, and starting earlier than September could cause problems later, because a gap will appear in your residence status. If you start later than September, then you would in effect be giving yourself less than twelve months to prepare.

Further information

www.studyin.nl
General information about studying in the Netherlands and addresses of university language centres.

www.nuffic.nl/international-students/preparation-stay/preparing-your-stay
Information about immigration and residence procedures for international students (also information about accelerated MVV procedure).

www.ind.nl/EN/index.asp
Information provided by the Dutch Immigration& Naturalisation Service on immigration requirements for studying in the Netherlands.

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Nuffic is the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education. Our motto is Linking Knowledge Worldwide. This means linking people, because it's knowledge that makes us unique as people. Nuffic works in line with Dutch government policy to serve students and higher education institutions in three key areas:

- **Capacity Building & Scholarships**
  Administrating 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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