

Fact sheet: Final student enrolment figures for 2020-2021

On 1 October 2020, 327,300 students were enrolled in Dutch universities for the 2020-2021 academic year. The total number of students has grown by 8% compared to the previous academic year.

Pre-university pupil intake

As a result of anti-COVID measures taken in secondary education, more pupils passed their pre-university school-leaving examinations. Accordingly, the definitive enrolment figures show that the direct pre-university intake has increased by 14%. A factor here is that in the pre-COVID period, a considerable number of first-year students would otherwise first have taken a gap year, for instance to travel.

Soft cut

At the start of the academic year, 55,801 students started a Master's programme: a 19% increase from the previous academic year. In the current year, students were provisionally allowed to move on to a Master's programme even though they still needed to obtain some credits for their Bachelor's programme (a rule referred to as the *zachte knip* or 'soft cut').

Provisional admission

The intake for this academic year also grew because of the provisional admission to a Bachelor's programme of students who had not yet completed the first-year phase of a university of applied sciences programme. An agreement was reached with the Ministry last year that students who still needed to obtain a small number of credits would be allowed to enrol in the subsequent programme of their choice on the condition that they would obtain the required credits by 31 December.

About 12,000 students from universities of applied sciences were admitted to a Bachelor's or pre-Master's programme at university, among them some 500 students who were admitted provisionally. At a later point, we will know the graduation rate among them.

Transfer rate of first-year students

Due among other reasons to the abrogation of the binding study advice last year, fewer first-year students dropped out. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 6% of the direct pre-university intake broke off their studies (about 32,000 students), compared with 8% for the 2018-2019 academic year. In addition, 12% of students changed degree programmes last year, compared with 15% in the previous year. The coming academic years will reveal the effects of suspending the binding study advice. It is possible that the drop-out rate will rise if students experience trouble in the course of their studies at a later point. In line with the binding study advice for the 2019-2020 academic year, the universities announced on 14 January that the binding study advice for the 2020-2021 academic year would be reduced by between 10% and 15%.

Study progress

Study progress results are now in for the first months of this new 2020-2021 academic year. The general picture is still that students have obtained the same number of credits, and



sometimes even somewhat more, than before COVID. The universities are monitoring the courses offered, study progress and the students' well-being.

Degree certificates

In the 2019-2020 academic year, a total of 39,551 Bachelor's degree certificates and 47,488 Master's degree certificates were issued. These numbers exceeded those of the 2018-2019 academic year. Student numbers at universities have doubled in the past twenty years. Logically, more students means that more degree certificates are issued. Due to COVID, not all final-year students managed to graduate. They have had to re-enrol in the final courses, work placements and final theses.

International students

On balance, the total number of enrolled international students rose by 13% since the previous academic year, to 70,250 students. Notwithstanding the anti-COVID measures, there was still an increase in the intake of EEA students (all EU countries plus Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland, as well as the UK for this year). The intake of students from outside of the EEA declined by 4%. We can conclude from the definitive enrolment figures that international talent is continuing to find its way to the Netherlands. It is unclear what the consequences of Brexit will be in the coming years.

Intake of students from universities of applied sciences

In the current academic year, 10,788 first-year students started a so-called pre-Master's programme intended to make it easier to transfer to university-level education. This pre-Master's programme is intended in particular for students from universities of applied sciences (9,431), as well as students who took their previous education abroad or who completed a Bachelor's degree programme in an academic discipline not fitting their Master's programme well. These figures are being recorded nationally for the first time this academic year.

Increase per discipline

Student numbers in all degree programmes have grown strongly since last year. Not just the degree programmes Economics, Law, and Behaviour, and Society are drawing many more students compared to the previous year (a 10% increase); there has also been strong growth in the fields of Nature (+10%), Technology (+5%) and Language & Culture (+7%). Where degree programmes in the field of Education shrank by 7% last year, they grew by 6% this year.