

Package of measures for self-regulation: internationalisation

Universities are taking measures to rebalance internationalisation and the use of English in bachelor's education. On one condition: that the government removes the compulsory non-Dutch-taught programme assessment (*Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs*, TAO) for existing programmes from the proposed bill and provides room for growth in sectors facing shortages. Only by doing this, we can provide certainty for current and prospective students and academics, while also attracting and retaining the international talent needed in the Netherlands. This way, we are working towards an internationalisation strategy that works for the Netherlands.

Agreements on reducing international bachelor intake and language conversion

- 1 The challenges related to internationalisation vary greatly between universities, programmes, cities, and regions. The balance between Dutch and international students requires reconsideration in certain areas and cities, particularly in internationally renowned, and therefore popular, bachelor's programmes such as business administration, economics, and psychology. To address this, we are implementing targeted measures in these fields.
- 2 Specifically, this means:
 - Psychology: Many English-language bachelor's programmes in psychology have a significant number of international students. However, compared to other disciplines, the stayrate of these international students is relatively low. Additionally, labour market projections predict a surplus of graduates. Therefore, a large proportion of psychology bachelor's programmes are being converted to fully Dutch-taught programmes. The remaining programmes are, or will become, bilingual, by adding a Dutch track. This approach allows us to foster international knowledge exchange while ensuring a strong connection to the Dutch context. After all, the social sciences are essential for tackling complex societal challenges and driving innovation in the Netherlands. The enrolment quota for psychology will remain in place: universities will make joint agreements on its size, allowing for targeted management of student intake and minimising capacity issues caused by unwanted "waterbed effects".
 - In the field of economics and business administration, and behaviour and society clusters (excluding psychology) we are also taking measures: one large economics bachelor's programme and an econometrics programme are being converted to Dutch. Additionally, Dutch tracks are being added, and (lower) enrolment quotas will be introduced for several large, English-taught programmes or tracks. In these clusters, universities have also jointly examined the size of student intake, progression to master's programmes, stay rates, and labour market projections.
- 3 These measures build on earlier steps, such as the discontinuation of English-taught programmes and the addition of Dutch-taught tracks. For example: UM and RUG have both discontinued an English-language track in medicine, RUG will offer pharmacy only in Dutch from 2025-2026, RU has discontinued the bachelor's programme in comparative European history, UT will discontinue the University College and will offer a Dutch track in psychology starting from 2025-2026, and VU has converted the bachelor's programme in theology and religious studies to Dutch.
- 4 TUD, TU/e, and WUR will each convert a small English-taught programme to Dutch or discontinue it, in solidarity with the other universities. On top of that, TUD has already started a Dutch track in computer science.
- 5 Regions experiencing population decline, border regions, and programmes for sectors with shortages such as, among others, STEM, AI, and teacher training programmes, will be exempt from these measures. In fact, the measures taken create room for targeted growth in English-taught programmes that educate students for shortage sectors, as the Netherlands urgently needs more international talent in these fields. In particular, bachelor's programmes within the HOOP areas of education (teacher training), science,

health, technology, and agriculture have significant outflow to shortage sectors. We have also agreed that universities will take these HOOP areas and regional labour market shortages into account when setting their strategic growth plans.

- 6 In addition, universities are taking several additional measures, including improving the Dutch language skills of foreign staff and students, strengthening the position of Dutch as the administrative language, increasing the stayrate, and adopting a more cautious approach to recruitment (see attachment).
- 7 This set of measures will result in an international bachelor intake in the coming years of up to 16,766 students (a decrease of more than 11% compared to intake in the academic year 2022-2023). This decrease will be considerably higher at some universities and disciplines, creating room to maintain international intake in regions experiencing population decline and for strategic growth in programmes educating for sectors with shortages.
- 8 The universities will assess in November and February, based on the preliminary and final intake figures, whether the agreements outlined above are delivering the desired results. If necessary, universities will implement additional measures or adjust existing ones.
- 9 In November 2026, the universities will evaluate the agreements and the joint policy. At that time, they will also assess whether strategic growth in shortage sectors is being sufficiently achieved and whether additional opportunities and measures are required.

Attachment: Measures for Complementary Policy

In February 2024, universities published the first package of self-regulation measures, emphasising that these policy intentions can only be realised if universities are given the necessary room to implement them. The agreements outlined above are a further elaboration of the agreements made in February 2024. The universities also made agreements on complementary policies, which are still in effect.

Measures to strengthen the position of the Dutch language

- 1 At the administrative level, Dutch is the formal language of communication, with room for English in communication with international students and staff.
- 2 The Dutch language proficiency of both Dutch and international students will be improved by offering modules that help enhance their skills. Additionally, the national "Academic Language Skills Working Group" is working on a guide with concrete recommendations. The guide will be published this year.
- 3 For international staff, language requirements will be introduced, and courses will be offered to ensure a minimum level of Dutch proficiency. Further details will be developed for this.

Measures to control the intake of English-taught bachelor's programmes

- 4 To reduce the intake of students in English-taught bachelor's programmes, universities will not actively recruit through international fairs. Universities will only actively recruit when there are regional or national shortages in the labour market. Universities distinguish between recruitment and communicating information. Universities will of course continue to provide information to prospective students, including about the contents of a degree programme.
- 5 In 2024, universities decided to discontinue the preparatory year for international students. The universities will stop doing so as soon as the contracts with the providers expire. By no longer offering a preparatory year, fewer prospective students will be eligible for a Dutch Bachelor's university education, limiting the intake of international students.

Increasing the stay rate and addressing student housing

- 6 Universities aim to increase the stay rate of international students by providing better career guidance, access to Dutch language courses, and closer collaboration with employers. Every university will develop a multi-year plan with regional and national employers to increase the stay rate.
- 7 Universities will advise international students not to come to the Netherlands if they do not have housing. They will recommend students to search for housing in advance, as well as appoint dedicated housing

staff to provide support. The expected decrease in intake will help alleviate some pressure on the housing market. Additionally, universities are working directly with responsible parties such as municipalities and housing corporations to increase the availability of housing. Large student complexes are currently being built in several cities.