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Netherlands

General Education

General Secondary Education (*algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*) is divided into two types: Pre-university education (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, VWO), which lasts for 6 years and can be obtained at a gymnasium, atheneum, or lyceum (a combination of gymnasium and atheneum), and Senior General Secondary Education (*hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*, HAVO), which lasts for 5 years. The general secondary education program concludes with national examinations in 7 subjects (VWO) or 6 subjects (HAVO). If the exams are successfully passed, a VWO or HAVO diploma is awarded.

In the lower stage (*onderbouw*), a wide range of subjects is offered and generally available to all students. They also receive guidance for further education and career planning. In the upper stage (*bovenbouw*) — years 4 and 5 for HAVO or years 4, 5, and 6 for VWO — also known as the tweede fase (second phase), education is organized into subject clusters (*profielen*), where one part is common for all students and another part is chosen individually. To proceed to higher education, all students must choose one of four subject clusters:

- Culture and Society (*cultuur en maatschappij*)
- Economics and Society (*economie en maatschappij*)
- Science and Health (*natuur en gezondheid*)
- Science and Technology (*natuur en techniek*)

To gain admission to higher education institutions, all requirements of the selected cluster must be met.
The HAVO diploma corresponds to level 4 of the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF level 4 / EQF level 4).
The VWO diploma corresponds to level 4+ of the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF level 4+ / EQF level 4).
A full description of NLQF levels 4 and 4+ can be found at: www.nlqf.nl

Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, VMBO)
Preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO), introduced in 1999 to replace preparatory vocational education (*voorbereidend beroepsonderwijs*, VBO) and junior general secondary education (*middelbaar algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*, MAVO), is oriented towards vocational training and lasts for 4 years. Like general secondary education, VMBO starts with a basic phase (*onderbouw*), which lasts 2 years and offers a variety of subjects. At the end of the second year (grade 5), students choose a learning path (*leerweg*) and a sector. VMBO has four sectors:

- Technology (*techniek*)
- Health, personal care, and welfare (*zorg en welzijn*)
- Economics (*economie*)
- Agriculture (*landbouw*)
- Within each sector, students can choose from four learning paths (*leerwegen*):
- Basic vocational pathway (*basisberoepsgerichte leerweg*)
- Advanced vocational pathway (*kaderberoepsgerichte leerweg*)
- Combined pathway (*gemengde leerweg*)

- Theoretical pathway (*theoretische leerweg*)

The theoretical pathway provides access to HAVO and vocational education programs (*vakopleidingen*) as well as management training in senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, MBO). The other pathways do not provide direct access to HAVO but offer solid preparation for MBO programs. VMBO programs are completed with national examinations. If these exams are passed, the VMBO diploma is awarded.

Depending on the specialization, the *Diploma Voorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs* (VMBO) qualifies at levels 1 or 2 of the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF level 1/2).

Vocational Education and Training

Higher vocational training consists of 4 levels:

- qualification level 1, assistant training (*assistentopleiding*) has a study duration of an ½ to 1 year and is concluded with an *ssistentopleiding* diploma;
- qualification level 2 basic vocational training (*basisberoepsopleiding*) has a study duration of 2 to 3 years and is concluded with a basisberoepsopleiding diploma;
- qualification level 3 vocational training (*vakopleiding*) lasts 2 to 4 years and is concluded with a *vakopleiding* diploma.
- The management training (*middenkaderopleiding*) at qualification level 4 lasts about 4 years and provides admission to higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO). The specialist training (*specialistenopleiding*) is also at qualification level 4 and lasts 1 to 2 years. Before the *specialistenopleiding*, pupils follow *vakopleiding* or *middenkaderopleiding*.

Pupils in the MBO can choose from 2 learning tracks (*leerwegen*): the school-based route with fulltime education (*beroepsopleidende leerweg* - BOL) in which pupils spend at least 20% and no more than 60% of their time as interns, and the work-based route (*beroepsbegeleidende leerweg* - BBL), in which at least 60% of their time is spent working as interns. Practical experience forms an important part of the training for both learning tracks.

The MBO diploma is positioned at level 1-4 of the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF level 1-4 / EQF leve l 1-4), depending on the duration and the specialisation of the programme.

Higher Education

There are 2 types of higher education in the Netherlands:

Higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO)

Universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands, known as *hogescholen*, provide higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, or HBO). This type of education focuses more on practical skills compared to academic university education (*wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, or WO).

HBO programs are offered across seven main fields:

- Economics
- Healthcare
- Agriculture
- Education
- Social and community services
- Arts
- Technology

Students can choose from a wide range of programs within these areas at institutions across the country. Some universities of applied sciences are dedicated to specific fields, such as the arts, agriculture, or teacher training.

Research-oriented higher education (*wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, WO)

Research universities (*universiteiten*) in the Netherlands provide wetenschappelijk *onderwijs*

(WO), which is focused on academic and research-based education. The goal is to prepare students for careers in scientific research or professions that require the application of scientific knowledge, such as dentistry or pharmacy. The programs emphasize analytical thinking, scientific reasoning, and addressing complex research.

Associate degree

Universities of applied sciences (*hogescholen*) also offer associate degree programmes, which are typically more practice-focused than HBO bachelor's programmes. These courses are designed to prepare students for professions that are currently in high demand. To ensure relevance to the job market, universities often collaborate with local businesses and organizations in developing and delivering these programmes.

Higher Education Qualifications

- ### Associate Degree

  Short cycle

  Level 5

  Level 5

  An associate degree programme is often more practically-oriented than an HBO bachelor's degree programme. Students are usually trained for a profession in demand. For instance, university of applied sciences work together with companies or organisations in the region.

  #### Rights Granted

  Work or starting a HBO bachelor's programme in a related field of study. Often students can complete the bachelor's programme in a relatively short time (2 years).

  #### Recognition Status

  Included in register NVAO The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO).: nvao.net

  #### Other Information

  https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science

  https://enic-naric.net/page-Netherlands

- ### Bachelor diploma (HBO); Bachelor diploma (WO)

  First cycle

  Level 6

  Level 6

  HBO bachelor's degree programmes prepare students for a particular profession. Universities of applied science (hogescholen) offer higher professional education (hoger beroepsonderwijs, HBO) is more practically-oriented than WO. HBO consists of 7 sectors: economics, healthcare, agriculture, education, social and community work, art and technology. Students can enroll in various study programmes in each of these sectors at universities of applied sciences throughout the Netherlands. Some universities of applied sciences specialize in a particular domain, such as arts, agriculture or teacher training.

  Universities (universiteiten) offer research-oriented higher education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs, WO). The aim of this type of education is to educate students as scientists or for a profession in which they can apply scientific knowledge (for example as a dentist or pharmacist). The emphasis is on scientific thinking and solving scientific issues. WO bachelor's programmes focus mainly on theory/academic research. Generally, a first-year phase leading to a first-year certificate; mainly (theoretical) education in 1 area of specialisation or a major/minor structure; often followed by a short thesis in the 3rd year.

  #### Rights Granted

HBO Bachelor's degree gives access to a HBO master's programme.

WO Bachelor's degree gives access to a WO master's programme. Access to a HBO master's programme is also possible.

Recognition Status

Included in register NVAO The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO): nvao.net

Other Information

https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science

https://enic-naric.net/page-Netherlands

- ## Master (HBO); Master (WO)

Second cycle

Level 7

Level 7

HBO Master - students acquire more in-depth knowledge of a specific profession; this culminates in a thesis or final project, with an emphasis on applied research.

WO Master - Universities (universiteiten) offer research-oriented higher education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs, WO). The aim of this type of education is to educate students as scientists or for a profession in which they can apply scientific knowledge (for example as a dentist or pharmacist). The emphasis is on scientific thinking and solving scientific issues.
Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc), Master of Laws (LLM), Master of Business Administration (MBA).

HBO's most have 1 year, 60 ECTS, art and teacher training programmes have a duration of 2 years, 120 ECTS; WO's have 1 year, 60 ECTS (most specialisations); 2 years, 120 ECTS (technical and natural sciences); 3 years, 180 ECTS (medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy and dentistry)

Please note: in principle graduates of master's degree programmes in university education (WO) are entitled to use one of the traditional Dutch titles:

- ingenieur (ir.) – after a completed degree programme in the field of technology, agriculture and the natural environment.
- meester (mr.) – after a completed degree programme in law. doctorandus (drs.) – after a completed degree programme in other fields of study.

Rights Granted

HBO Master - usually further specialisation in a specific profession.

WO - access to a PhD programme (Doctor/PhD or PDEng).

Recognition Status

Included in register NVAO The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO): nvao.net

Other Information

https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science

https://enic-naric.net/page-Netherlands

- ## EngD; PhD

Third cycle

Level 8

Level 8

EngD - the content puts emphasis on technological design; this type of programme is more focused on practice and business/industry than the PhD programme.

PhD - conducting independent research, possibly in combination with training, and the writing of a dissertation, following a public defence of it.

Rights Granted

This is the highest academic qualification.

Recognition Status

Issuing institution and study field must be accredited.

Other Information

https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science

https://enic-naric.net/page-Netherlands

Useful Links

- NVAO is the binational accreditation organisation for higher education in the Netherlands and in Flanders (the Flemish Community of Belgium).
- NVAO is listed on the EQAR as a trustworthy quality assurance agency.
- Netherlands profile on ENIC-NARIC portal

For more information, please visit ar-go.online.

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