



*With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union*

**„Identifying Barriers in Promoting the European Standards and Guidelines  
for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

**IBAR**

Agreement number – 2010 – 4663/001 - 001

**WP6**

**Quality and Access**

National study – The Netherlands

2011

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



**Project “Identifying barriers in promoting European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance at institutional level” (IBAR)**

**National study: Quality and Access (WP 6)**

**The Netherlands**

Authors: Leisyte, L, Epping, E. Faber, M. De Weert, E.  
Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS)  
Universiteit Twente  
P. O. Box 217, 7500 AE Enschede  
The Netherlands





**Project “Identifying barriers in promoting European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance at institutional level” (IBAR)**

## Table of Contents

<b><u>Table of Contents</u></b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b><u>Executive Summary</u></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><u>1 Introduction</u></b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1 Structure of secondary education.....	5
1.2 Access to Higher Education policies and main trends .....	6
1.3 Participation in higher education.....	8
<b><u>2 Student Access in Case A institution (Small University)</u></b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1 Description of student access at Case A institution.....	12
2.1.1 Institutional policy on access .....	12
2.1.2 Alignment with national policy.....	13
2.1.1 Responsibility for ensuring and monitoring access.....	13
2.1.2 Availability of access conditions and selection information .....	14
2.1.3 Data on access.....	14
2.1.4 Change in the pattern of enrolments.....	15
2.1.5 Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students .....	15
<b><u>3 Student Access in Case B institution (Small HBO institution)</u></b> .....	<b>16</b>
3.1 Description of student access at Case B institution.....	16
3.1.1 Institutional policy on access .....	16
3.1.2 Alignment with national policy.....	17
3.1.3 Monitoring of access.....	17
3.1.4 Availability of access conditions and selection information .....	18
3.1.5 Data on access.....	18
3.1.6 Disaggregate data on access.....	18
3.1.7 Change in the pattern of enrolments.....	19
3.1.8 Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students .....	19
<b><u>4 Student Access in Case C institution (Big University)</u></b> .....	<b>20</b>
4.1 Description of student access at Case C institution.....	20
4.1.1 Institutional policy on access .....	20
4.1.2 Alignment with national policy.....	21
4.1.3 Monitoring of access.....	21
4.1.4 Availability of access conditions and selection information .....	21
4.1.5 Data on access.....	21
4.1.6 Disaggregate data on access.....	22
4.1.7 Change in the pattern of enrolments.....	22

4.1.8 Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students .....22

**5 Student Access in Case D institution (Big HBO institution).....23**

5.1 Description of student access at Case D institution.....23

5.1.1 Institutional policy on access .....23

5.1.2 Monitoring of access.....24

5.1.3 Availability of access conditions and selection information .....25

5.1.4 Data on access.....25

5.1.5 Disaggregate data on access.....27

5.1.6 Change in the pattern of enrolments.....27

5.1.7 Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students .....27

**6 Perceptions on student access in the case study institutions.....28**

6.1.1 What are perceived to be the main drivers of change in student access?....28

6.1.2 Issues surrounding access in the system.....28

6.1.3 Change in approach to the way institution manages quality.....30

**7 Conclusion.....30**

7.1 Identified Barriers.....31

7.2 Recommendations.....31

**8 References.....32**



## Project “Identifying barriers in promoting European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance at institutional level” (IBAR)

### Executive Summary

Given the general structure of secondary education and the different study profiles Dutch HE has a rather open system. The leading principle is that everyone given the standard entry qualifications has a right to enter higher education. Access to universities is open for students with a pre-university school-leaving certificate or a hogescholen(HBO) propaedeutic certificate. Admission to hogescholen is open to all students who hold the mid secondary education (upper level). The only limitation to this “open system” in both the university and HBO sector is the system of *numerus fixus*, which applies to a limited number of study programmes, such as the medical studies (in Universities) and in the HBO for the paramedical subjects (e.g. physiotherapy), tourism, and arts. In case of a *numerus fixus* programme, students can be selected through a so-called weighted-lottery system. The changes were introduced in 2000, when institutions got an opportunity to select up to 10% of their students in a decentralized way. This freedom for HE institutions to select their students on entrance has been extended over the years and institutions increasingly take the opportunity to do so. As perceived by the institutions, the key drivers for change in student access are the national policies on student selection, financial cuts coming from the government, less funding per student and the future expectation of demographic trends of decreasing student numbers in the country. Overall, a steady increase in student numbers has been observed and institutions have been monitoring the student enrolments, progression, graduation and drop-outs on a regular basis.

## 1 Introduction

The higher education system in the Netherlands consists of two sectors, the university sector (WO) and the sector of higher professional education (HBO, in Dutch *hogescholen*). Both the universities and the *hogescholen* have their own focus on education, as defined in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) of 1993: “The universities prepare students for independent scientific work in an academic or professional setting; *hogescholen* offer theoretical instruction and aim to develop the skills required for application in a particular profession. Practical experience is an important part of the training.

The university sector comprises 13 universities. They prepare students for independent scientific work in an academic or professional setting. There are nine universities which

offer programmes in a wide range of disciplines and subject areas, three provide mainly technical and engineering programmes and one is specialised in agriculture. In addition the Open University provides programmes both on university and HBO degree-level.

The HBO sector consists of 40 *hogescholen*, internationally termed ‘Universities of Applied Sciences’. They provide programmes in the following sectors: economics, health, agriculture, education, engineering and arts. These programmes normally have a standard length of four years and students receive after completion the Bachelor degree. Programmes can be on a full-time and part-time basis.

The HBO-sector is the largest sector with over 380,000 students enrolled either full-time or part-time (respectively 80% and 20% of enrolments) in 2010. The total enrolment in universities is about 220,000 students.

In the following we will shortly outline the structure of secondary education since it directly influences the access to higher education as well as present the main developments in access policies and participation rates in higher education in the Netherlands over the past decade.

### 1.1 Structure of secondary education

The Secondary Education Act (WVO) distinguishes four main streams of secondary education each with their own specific orientation and qualification level.

- Vocational education (MBO),
- Middle general secondary education (MAVO),
- Higher general secondary education (HAVO) and
- Pre-university education (VWO) including gymnasium.

Vocationally education consists of a first two years of education that provides a basis for further vocational training in senior vocational education (MBO), either in full-time or in part-time (tracks combining learning and working). Vocational education (MBO) comprises two alternative learning pathways: block or day release (BBL) and part-time or full-time vocational training (BOL). The vocational courses can be taken at different levels.

The middle general track (MAVO) is rather general and is meant as a basis for further education in either some vocational or higher general track.

Pupils choosing the preparatory path for higher education have two options: studying the three years of preparatory higher professional education (HAVO) or the four years of preparatory university education (VWO). The curriculum of this type of education has been organised according to a set of subjects together constituting a particular profile on the basis of which access to specific higher education courses has been determined (De Weert and Boezerroy 2007).

There are four such profiles: culture & society (preparing in general for the social sciences, history, languages and culture), economy & society (preparing for economy

and social sciences), nature & health (preparing for medical and agricultural sciences and biology), and nature & technology (preparing for natural sciences and engineering). Each profile forms a consistent set of knowledge and skills and consists of a compulsory part (50%) meant for general education, a profile part (30%) to prepare for higher education, and a free part (20%) for personal development. The final examinations consist of school examinations and national examinations.

For access to particular higher education programmes a specific profile of secondary education is required. For example access to technical and natural Sciences the profile nature & technology is required. It is not always a one-to-one relationship, as for example for the medical sciences the profile of nature & technology as well as nature & health is accepted. Those with a nature & technology profile have in principle access to most HE programmes. Apart from this HE institutions can admit students who have not the right profile by setting additional requirements.

Whereas many HE institutions offer possibilities to repair shortcomings in the qualifications at the beginning of the first year, there is more pressure repairing this before students actually are enrolling into a programme.

The structure of profiles is continuously under revision. As far as the content is concerned new subjects have been added, such as informatics and organization. There is also more orientation on higher education in general, and a self-reflection on the pupil's career in order to prepare pupils for the choices to be made after secondary education.

## **1.2 Access to Higher Education policies and main trends**

Given the general structure of secondary education and the different study profiles Dutch HE has a rather open system. The leading principle is that everyone given the standard entry qualifications has a right to enter higher education.

Admission to hogescholen is open to all students who hold the HAVO, MBO (upper level) or VWO certificate or any equivalent qualification. Alternatively, applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may be admitted after passing a colloquium doctum entrance examination. The hogescholen may also set subject specific entrance requirements particularly when the intended study programme leads to a professional qualification. All such requirements must have the Minister's approval and included in the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO) in advance of the application process.

Access to universities is open for students with a pre-university school-leaving certificate (VWO) or a hogescholen propaedeutic certificate. Admission is also open for students who graduated at a hogeschool. In some cases hogescholen graduates may even be exempted from parts of the university programmes. Alternatively, applicants aged 21 or over who do not possess the required qualifications may be admitted after passing a colloquium doctum entrance examination. Like the HBO-sector the university sector is also characterised by open access.

Figures 1 and 2 indicate the new entrants into university Bachelor's respectively HBO programmes according to their prior education. For the HBO education the HAVO is the main access route, followed by the vocational track (MBO). The access route to HBO is therefore more heterogeneous than for universities where the VWO is the standard route. The Ministry aims to improve the entry route from the vocational track (MBO) to HBO in order to increase the coherence between vocational training throughout the educational system.

The only limitation to this "open system" in both the university and HBO sector is the system of *numerus fixus*, which applies to a limited number of study programmes, such as the medical studies (in Universities) and in the HBO for the paramedical subjects (e.g. physiotherapy), tourism, and arts. There are three types of *numerus fixus* (applying for both the hogescholen and the universities). The first type (also the oldest one) is known as the capacity *fixus*. When the number of applicants exceeds the national teaching capacity, the Minister decides upon the number of places (nationally and at the institutional level) which will be available. The Minister may also limit the intake of students if it can be shown that the supply of graduates from a particular programme exceeds the need of the labour market by a substantial amount and when this is expected to be the case for a number of years (labour market *fixus*). A third type of *numerus fixus* is the institutional *fixus*: HE institutions have been given more autonomy in determining their teaching capacity. If the number of applicants exceeds the expected enrolments in such a way that the teaching capacity of a particular programme is insufficient or a higher intake would in fact endanger the quality of teaching, the institution can apply for setting a *numerus fixus*.

In case of a *numerus fixus* programme, students can be selected through a so-called weighted-lottery system. This applies for example for the medical study. The main characteristic of this system is that the lottery ticket decides on admission to courses with an entrance restriction. However, it is a weighted lottery, which provides greater chances on admission for candidates with higher average examination grades in secondary education. Candidates are divided over different lottery categories according to the average grade attained at secondary school. Students who are not placed may re-apply the next year but they do not receive any credit for the waiting period.

Nowadays the candidates with an average grade of 8 or higher in secondary education will be directly admitted to the programme of their choice whereas the other applicants will have to go through the weighted lottery procedure. Since 2000 both hogescholen and universities have the opportunity to select a certain percentage (originally 10%) of the total places available (decentral admissions). Selection takes place on basis of motivation, working experience, or any other criterion the institution considers appropriate. In the arts sector all students go through a selection procedure.

These developments have been prompted by the changing regulation of access to higher education. Selection mechanisms has been changed since 1999 where according to the recommendations of the Drenth committee established in 1996, regulation from the Minister of Education, Science and Culture was passed. It introduced the average grade 8 or higher in secondary education for direct admission to a programme at a higher education institution. Other candidates have to go through the weighted lottery



procedure as described above. Further changes were introduced in 2000, when institutions got an opportunity to select up to 10% of their students in a decentralized way (de Weert and Boezerroy, 2007).

This freedom for HE institutions to select their students on entrance has been extended over the years and institutions increasingly take the opportunity to select their students (for example for medical studies varying from 10% up to 40%). The current government advocates this development and challenges HE institutions to assure that 'the right student will get the right place'. In the Strategic Agenda published by the Minister in July 2011, the view dominates that selection on entrance will enhance the motivation and effort of students. Students will make a more conscious study choice and will be stimulated to perform better in secondary education. They will be challenged to get higher grades as this will increase their chances to be admitted to the study of their preference. The Minister aims to review legislation enabling HE institutions to select their students. Basic criterion is that selection always should be focused on a better tuning between the level and profile of the programme on the one hand and the capabilities and motivation of students on the other. In such a system the current lottery system is not seen an appropriate instrument and will be abolished.

This view of the Minister has been largely shaped by the conclusions of the Veerman Committee (2010) which had suggested that all HEIs should be allowed to select applicants at entry. However, selection ought to yield a better match between students' interests and competences and the orientation of their selected study programmes. Selection should not translate into a curtailment of participation in higher education (Cremonini et al. 2011). Hence, the key policy initiative at the moment is to improve the ability of getting the right student in the right spot, which is expected to bolster study motivation and student/faculty involvement, reduction of drop-out rates and transfers, and improve the graduation rates (Veerman et al. 2010)

In view of this policy development HE institutions will be able to develop their own access policies, such as defining own selection criteria or entrance prerequisites, the quantity of the student intake, and the connection with the different streams in secondary education. The question arises what implications this development may have for the accessibility of Dutch higher education as a whole.

### **1.3 Participation in higher education**

The Dutch Government has in the context of the Lisbon goals expressed its goal of increasing the participation in HE and rise the educational level of the population. Following the advice by the Dutch Educational Council, the Dutch government formulated the objective for the coming decades. In 2050 50% of the labour force in the age group of 25 to 44 should at least have a Bachelor degree. Four ways have been proposed to reach this 50% goal:

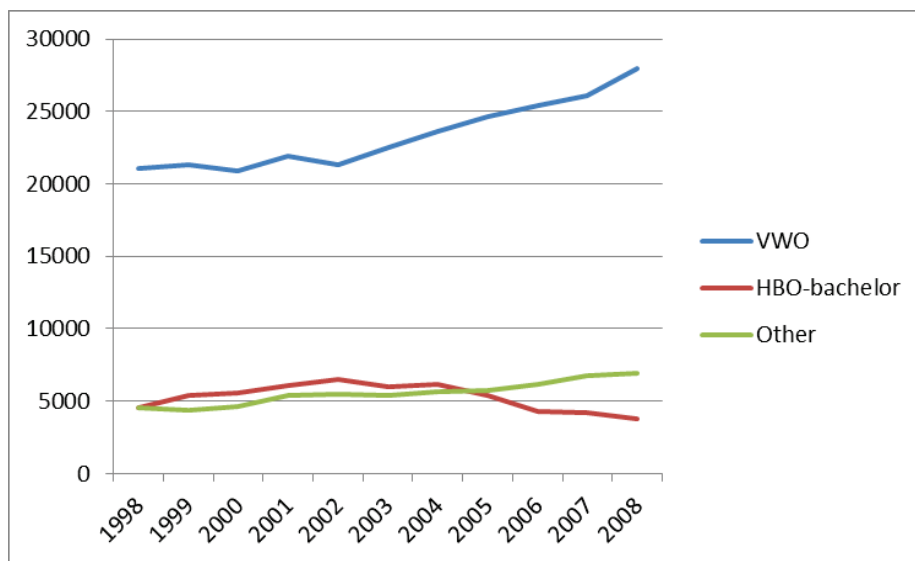
- Qualify more students to enter higher education, especially by increasing the number of students that proceed from vocational education (MBO) to higher education,
- Increase the success rate of students and decrease the number of drop-outs,

- Increase the number of graduates in the age group above 30 who are still lagging behind the younger age group,
- Attract more foreign graduates for the Dutch labour market.

Currently, part-time study possibilities are limited in BA programmes at universities and the big majority of BA students are coming directly from secondary school and study full-time.

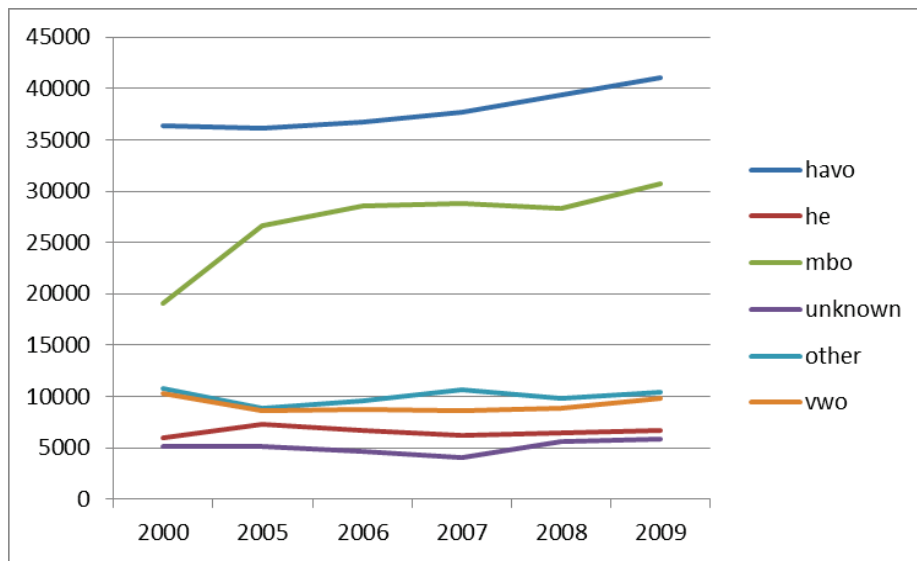
As a response to the governmental vision, various HE institutions have created new pathways in learning which respond to individual demands, and it is expected that these demands will increase explosively to facilitate life-long learning. Examples are more customised education, assessment procedures (for example, admission to a shortened programme based on work experience), e-learning, cooperative education (combining education and work), and short-cycle higher education (Associate Degrees). In this context the EVC's (acquired competences acquired on the workplace or elsewhere) have become a more accepted ways of assessing the entry qualifications of new entrants.

**Figure 1: Intake into University bachelor's programmes according to prior education (1998-2008)**



Source: CBS 2009, Report of the Committee Veerman (2010), Threefold Differentiation, p. 68.

**Figure 2: New entrants into HBO according to prior education (2000-2009)**

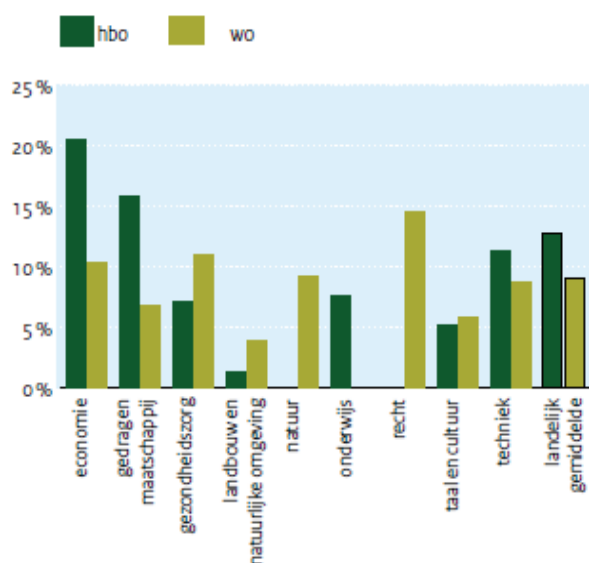


Source: HBO-raad, Facts and Figures, 2010, see also Veerman report, p. 66.

When it comes to minority representation in higher education, the percentages are rather moderate. For example, in the HBO sector, 13% of entrants in 2008 were non-Western origin Dutch nationals (a classification of Dutch residents, who have at least one parent born abroad in a non-Western European country). As we can see from Figure 3, the entrants to HBO of non-Western origin Dutch nationals mainly choose studies in economics and behavioral sciences rather than hard sciences.

**Figure 3: Percentage of non-western origin Dutch national entrants to HBO and WO sectors per field, 2008.**

Figuur 17 Percentage niet-westers allochtone studenten met de Nederlandse nationaliteit in de instroom (bachelor- en ongedeelde opleidingen) per sector, hbo en wo, 2008



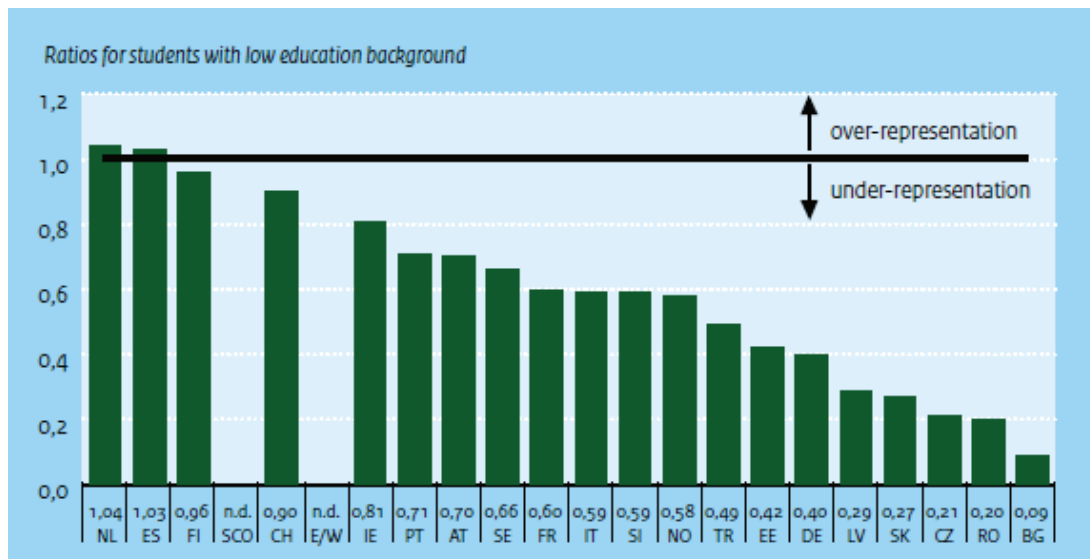
Bron: 1 cijfer HO 2008/CFI

Source: OCW, Kennis in Kaart 2009.

This group of students tends to go to HBO late compared to regular Dutch nationals (21-25 age group compared to 16-20 age group), which partly explains why they do not go further for the higher education at universities (OCW, 2009). However, it has to be noted that it is difficult to note the trends of the representation of different ethnic groups and thus minorities, since statistics is not collected in institutions on this aspect due to legal requirements.

The numbers of students coming from families of low education background have been slightly increasing over the years as it is shown from the comparison of the 1989 and 1999 years cohorts. At present day, the representation of such students is rather good compared to the situation in other countries as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Ratios of students with fathers from low education background 2005-2008**



Source: OCW, Kennis in Kaart, 2009.

Finally, research has also shown, that students with disabilities make up 16.5% of total entrants to higher education in the Netherlands in 2009. The percentage is higher in the HBO professional education sector – 17.4% while at universities it is 14.7%.

Taking into account the national policy framework regarding access to higher education in the following we will present the findings regarding access in the case study higher education institutions. This will include the presentation of the institutional policies on access and their implementation.

## 2 Student Access in Case A institution (Small University)

### 2.1 Description of student access at Case A institution

#### 2.1.1 Institutional policy on access

Institution A is a specialized small size university in the Netherlands with a rather high proportion of international students. Their percentage varies between the different levels of studies. The international students among BA students comprise around 6% while

among Master's students – 43%. Its overall student numbers have been steadily increasing over the past ten years.

For a student to be admitted to one of the Bachelor programmes at this institution the following requirements apply:

- A secondary school leaving certificate (equivalent to a Dutch VWO diploma) which gives admission to a university.
- A list of subjects (taken at the required level) relevant to the programme the student is applying for. (Most of the bachelor programmes at this institution require a high level of mathematics, some also require biology, chemistry, physics or economics).
- Fluency in the Dutch language. Students who do not have a Dutch VWO diploma should be in the possession of an NT2-II (Dutch as a second language) certificate.
- Fluency in the English language (especially for one specific bachelor). If the language of instruction during the secondary school education was not English you will require:
  - o IELTS test overall grade 6
  - o TOEFL test (paper-based 550; internet-based 79-80)
  - o Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English: pass at grade C
  - o Cambridge First Certificate: pass at grade B/C
  - o Dutch VWO diploma: English
  - o German 'Abitur': English at 'leistungskurs'

Students with a certificate of the first year of a University of Applied Sciences (i.e. the Dutch HBO propedeutic exam), also need to fulfil the VWO requirements stated above to enter a BSc program at this institution. BSc Graduates from a Dutch Hogeschool who would like to enter a BSc program at this institution, may get exemption for the entrance examination or for one of more courses, if their program is related to the study program they wish to follow at this institution. Students who are not in the possession of one of the diploma's stated above, can arrange access via the so-called Colloquium Doctum.

### *2.1.2 Alignment with national policy*

The institutional policy on access in the institution A is in line with the national regulation on access as postulated in the Chapter 7 Articles 2 and 3 of the WHW from 1993 (see previous section). In addition the study programs may have their particular requirements for admission.

#### *2.1.1 Responsibility for ensuring and monitoring access*

The bachelor admission committee is responsible for ensuring and monitoring access in the institution A. In some cases this committee consults the directors of the study programs. Only in extraordinary cases the examination committee is called in.

### *2.1.2 Availability of access conditions and selection information*

The institution organises several activities to inform students in the secondary education sector about the institution itself, its study programmes and student life. Potential students and their parents can receive information about the content of the different study programmes and requirements of access to this institution via information brochures, information provision at the secondary schools and open days at the institution.. The institution also provides information on Dutch system of study financing and other pertinent national regulation for potential students. The institutions also offer coaching services on programme choice. The conditions for access are explicitly laid out on the institution's website and on the national website of the national admissions service available at: [www.studiekeuze123.nl](http://www.studiekeuze123.nl).

### *2.1.3 Data on access*

The institution collects data on conferred diplomas, study success rates, the number of (re) enrolments, and the drop-outs within the BSc student cohorts.

Specifically, the institution collects the following information on enrolled students:

- Number of students per BSc programme per study-year. The students who changed programmes within the BSc programmes are only counted once when they had enrolled in a BSc or MSc programme.
- The total number of students per BSc programme
- The number of first-year student enrolment per BSc programme.
- The total number of students enrolled in the institution.

The enrolment data can be further divided according to different characteristics, such as, the percentage of women participating in a particular degree programme; and nationality. Data on ethnicity is not collected.

In addition, the institution collects data on non-completion and their graduates:

- The drop-out rate during, or just after the first year.
- The drop-out rate based on students who were registered in the 2nd year.
- The rate of students still enrolled in their programme after x years, based on students who were registered in the second year.

### *Disaggregate data on access*

The institution collects the following information with regard to different student cohorts: students' prior learning/qualifications, students' nationality, distribution of

students according to different continents, gender, age. The differentiation is made between Dutch students, other students from Europe and the rest of the world. Furthermore, different cohorts can be disaggregated in terms of type of enrolment. For example, type of degree to be attained. Among international students, a distinction is made between Erasmus exchange students and other international students. Erasmus exchange students however in most cases come to study at a Master's level. All this information may be collected not only at the institutional level, but also available at the national level via the student application registration system.

In case a student has a disability, this will not be registered in the general information system of the institution. It would however be registered by so called "study deans" who oversee the programmes. It is their responsibility to inform teachers involved in the education of a particular student about the disability. However, this information is publicly not available.

#### *2.1.4 Change in the pattern of enrolments*

During the last few years the number of first year student enrolments have significantly increased in this institution. The average growth in first-year students over the last four years is 14 %, while in the Bachelor of Science programmes the growth is around 17%. Growth is observed in the number of BSc students with a VWO background and MSc students with a foreign diploma. Also MSc students who have obtained their BSc diploma at another Dutch university is on the rise. The number of German students entering a BSc programme and HBO students entering an MSc programme remains more or less stable during the past three years (23 in 2008, 60 in 2009 , 55 in 2010 and 64 in 2011. However this is an increase from 8 German students in 2007. The number of BSc diplomas has risen sharply in the study year 2009-2010 (+ 24%) while the number of MSc degrees has stayed at the same level. It is expected that both numbers will rise in the further.

#### *2.1.5 Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students*

There are different ways in which this institution supports the admission and progression of students at the institutional level. The main office responsible for these activities is called student service center. It has three teams with the following tasks:

- Student Administration: is responsible for admissions, applications, registration and graduation of students;
- International Office: is responsible for administrative guidance of the international students;
- Student Counselling: is responsible for student counselling and student well-being.



Student counselling takes care of the support and guidance of students who are at risk to delay their studies. The team also provides support for personal problems and medical advice for students with respect to their study and stay abroad. The student deans offer help with questions regarding financial arrangements, study delay due to circumstances beyond one's control, they help to resolve conflicts and provide mediation, as well as provide counselling on studying with a function disability or on career opportunities.

The number of students from Germany has grown significantly from 2007 to 2008. As a result, the student service center offers special guidance for German students in their process of application. They also provide a six-week Dutch course and support in finding student housing. These services are offered in addition to the admission procedures catered for German students.

In terms of information materials, the institution provides a Student guide with information about studying in the Institution's city. During the summer period, it organizes an information point available for students where 'experienced' students help new students find their way. In addition, the institution provides a programme where its employees are available to welcome international exchange students.

With respect to students with disability, the following services and arrangements are available. Special provisions necessary to participate in classes and take examinations are available:

- Adjustments in examinations concern the form of assessment, the time the student needs for a particular assessment, or spread of examinations over a course of time; additional supplies and duration of the examination, and the location of the examination (for example in separate, low-stimulus room).
- Adjustments of classes are made regarding: the content of the programme (by offering alternative but equal subject matter and/or study material) and the delivery of the courses (which can also mean that the student is not obliged to be present in the classroom).

### **3 Student Access in Case B institution (Small HBO institution)**

#### **3.1 Description of student access at Case B institution**

This institution is a smaller, sectoral, higher education institution in the Netherlands, a 'hogeschool' (i.e. a university of applied sciences). It's market share in student numbers was ca 1% in 2010 of all Dutch hogescholen.

##### *3.1.1 Institutional policy on access*

Students wishing to study a bachelor's degree at this institution should meet the following requirements:

- a diploma of secondary education/high school diploma at the level of the Dutch VWO or HAVO; or the highest level of MBO; or
- a certificate for the successful completion of the first year (in Dutch propedeuse) of the Dutch HBO or WO; or
- a certificate for the successful completion (final examination) of the Dutch HBO or WO;
- or and for foreign students diplomas which are equivalent; or
- a proof that the admission examination for the specific study program is successfully completed (art. 7.29 WHW).

Next to these requirements, the potential students can be admitted to a BA programme if they meet the requirements of the specific profile. Some programmes may have complementary entrance requirements.

Potential students older than 21 years of age who do not possess one of the qualifications mentioned above can qualify for access to higher education on the basis of an entrance examination and assessment.

Students who follow their courses in a non-Dutch language furthermore need a sufficient level of fluency in English to start the course, which means an IELTS score of 6.0. Foreign students may also need to fulfil the requirement of a sufficient level in Dutch.

Next to access to the first year bachelor studies, students who are already following a Bachelor programme in a relevant field, or have a couple of years of working experience, can move on to the final phase bachelors. This means that students can start in the third year of a bachelor course and follow the remaining part of the programme. The institution has partnership agreements with foreign higher education institutions, whereby students can engage in preparatory study in their home country, and continue their bachelors program at institution B.

### *3.1.2 Alignment with national policy*

The institutional policy on access is in line with the national regulation as in the previous case.

### *3.1.3 Monitoring of access*

The examination committee of each programme is responsible for student access. The admission is organized and monitored mostly centrally. The education office (onderwijsbureau) is responsible for the correct registration of students.

### 3.1.4 Availability of access conditions and selection information

Students from secondary schools are informed about access to this institution in a number of ways. The conditions and selection procedures to this institution are described on the website of the institution as well as in the information brochures. This information is also available on a national website: [www.studiekeuze123.nl](http://www.studiekeuze123.nl). In addition, the institution offers open days and try-out days when prospective students can visit the institution and try out a specific programme.. On request, the institution also offers information to secondary schools, it also maintains contacts with the deans of the secondary schools. Recently, it started to offer coaching on study choice for prospective students.

### 3.1.5 Data on access

This institution offers no programmes which fall under the numerus fixus admission procedures. It collects the following data on enrolments:

- The prior educational attainment of a student
- The number of credits achieved after the first study year
- The completion rate of the foundation programme within the first two years of study
- The number and enrolment of funded students by location and programme

At the national level, information on students is also registered. This includes information of the student's study programme and academic results from secondary education.

In addition, the institution collects data on non-completion of study programmes. The data includes:

- The number of students who stop their study prematurely;
- The duration of the study programmes of drop-outs.

Finally, the institution collects data on graduates and average study programme duration by location and programme.

### 3.1.6 Disaggregate data on access

The institution collects data on its students by gender, mode of study, nationality, disability. Although information on ethnicity of students is not gathered, there is a division of students into students with both parents born in the Netherlands and those who have at least one parent born outside the Netherlands. For the latter group, a further distinction can be made between western and non-western parents (the latter are those who come from Turkey or countries in Africa, Latin-America and Asia, with exemption of former Dutch-India / Indonesia and Japan).

Furthermore there is information on the number of incoming and outgoing international students, such as Erasmus exchange students. Finally, data on student population can be

disaggregated according to the highest diploma students hold with which they enter their bachelor studies, and also what study profile (in Dutch: studieprofiel) they have followed in the secondary school.

### *3.1.7 Change in the pattern of enrolments*

In the period 2007 – 2010 the total number of registered students has been stable, with a small increase of 2%. In 2010 there was an incidental increase in new enrolments, and in 2011 a decrease. In the period 2001-2007 student numbers decreased as well. For different cohorts, it can be noted that at this institution the number of Dutch students whose parents were born in the Netherlands remained somewhat stable, with approximately 77-79% of the total number of full-time new enrolments (source: Year report and the Dutch HBO website). Also, the number of students with a complex disability such as autism and ADHD have increased.

### *3.1.8 Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students*

Various measures are taken to support both the admission and progression students at this institution. In general, study support services and a digital student portfolio are essential elements in the competence-oriented curriculum of this institution. As the study progresses, the emphasis of guiding and support of student moves towards more self-steering. Students can record and demonstrate their competence development using the digital portfolio.

For international students, the following arrangements are in place. They are offered Dutch language courses. The international office assists them in visa application procedures, finding student housing and meeting them at the airport upon arrival. Abroad, some former-students work as contact persons for international (potential) students. In some study programmes international students may enter in the 3rd bachelor year. In such cases, study programmes are organized with the partner organization to ensure a smooth transition, also in terms of quality.

In addition, study deans are available for supporting students in their studies. Communication with the students is seen as an important function of the study deans. This serves the students who experience problems with their study and who have questions concerning study- and career choices. Further study deans help students having personal and/or psychological problems or disabled students (mainly with dyslexia and autism related conditions). As noted in the interviews, most questions from students are related to problems related to study progress and personal circumstances.

## 4 Student Access in Case C institution (Big University)

### 4.1 Description of student access at Case C institution

#### 4.1.1 Institutional policy on access

Institutional policy on diversity is oriented towards openness in nationalities, disciplines, ideologies and social convictions. The Yearly report notes that diversity gives rise to new insights and innovations and academic excellence and is embraced in the university policy documents as one of the three core values of the institution. In fact, it sees the diversity of student body as a special strength.

Due to the decreasing funding per student the University educational policy as seen from the Strategic plan 2011-2015 is oriented towards priority setting. The aim is to reduce the drop-out rates and to increase quality as well as efficiency of the educational system at the University. This means stronger profiling of educational programs and better informing potential students about these profiles.

For a student to be admitted to one of the Bachelor programmes at this university the following requirements apply:

- A secondary school leaving certificate (equivalent to a Dutch VWO diploma) which gives admission to a university.
- Fluency in the Dutch language. Students who do not have a Dutch VWO diploma should be in the possession of an NT2-II (Dutch as a second language) certificate.
- Fluency in the English language for programmes in English.

The numerus fixus is applied to seven study areas at this university, two of them still can be applied via the central admission system: biomedical sciences, dentistry, psychology, Criminology, Management and organizational studies, International Business administration, and Medicine. The central admission takes place via [www.studielink.nl](http://www.studielink.nl), which is a website of the national central admissions services (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs DUO).

Students who are not in the possession of one of the diploma's stated above, can arrange access via the so-called Colloquium Doctum. The conditions for the Colloquium Doctum are: a student is 21 years or older; does not hold a Dutch VWO diploma or equivalent diploma; and intends to follow a Bachelors program at this institution.

#### 4.1.2 *Alignment with national policy*

The institutional policy on access as noted in its internal admission regulation is in line with the national regulation on access as postulated in Chapter 7 Art. 7.32 until 7.42a of the WHW. In addition, certain study programs may have their particular requirements for admission.

#### 4.1.3 *Monitoring of access*

The Educational Office monitors student progression after the first year and at the time of graduation. For the BA programmes the Central Student Administration is responsible for ensuring and monitoring access. Student apply via the national portal and the Central Student Administration checks whether the applicants qualify for the programme. For the international BA applicants, the International Office is responsible for checking the eligibility of applicants for entrance. The faculty boards are responsible for the entrance into the Master level programmes and this function is mostly delegated to an admissions committee.

#### 4.1.4 *Availability of access conditions and selection information*

The university has a couple of options to inform students from the secondary education sector about the university, the study programmes and student life. As seen from the site visits and website information, students and their parents can find information via information brochures, information services at the secondary schools and open days at the institution. This information can also concern national regulation on the Dutch system of study finance. The Website of the university provides a video about the university as well as a clear description of all their Bachelor programs. The study advisors from the Central student affairs and career office can respond to email queries.

The prospective students can make an appointment for a one our consultation and undertake the study choice test with the study choice advisor. Another alternative is to enlist into one day course which costs 100 euros (minimum 6 participants) where the study advisors inform about the choices student shave and make personal study choice test with prospective students. For students from HBO sector entering university or from other universities, there are special series of courses of two hours offered by the same study advisors.

#### 4.1.5 *Data on access*

The university collects a range of data on data on student enrolment at different levels (study programmes, faculty, whole university) and for students of different backgrounds

(gender, nationality, former education). The university monitors student progression after the first year, then after 3, 4 and 5 years and the graduation.

#### *4.1.6 Disaggregate data on access*

The first year enrolments in 2010/2011 have been 4375 students for the Bachelor's studies. This university has one of the largest student populations from the non-Western background Dutch nationals.

In 2006/07 the University had around 1500 Bachelor graduates, and around 2000 Master graduates. Over years, the number of Bachelor graduates has increased to around 2500 in 2009/10, Master level graduates to around 3000. The statistics provides information only for the separate studies of numerus clausus graduates, that is medicine and teacher training. In these studies the number of graduates has also slightly increased from around 60 in teacher training in 2006/07 to 80 in 2009/10, and for medical doctors from around 250 in 2006/07 to 300 in 2009/2010. The overall time to degree has improved over years. In 2003/04 around 55% of students graduated within 4 years of their Bachelor studies, while in 2006/07 – this increased to 60%.

The faculties have been seriously considering the drop-out rates and have put forward targets how to decrease these rates by 2014 to reach at least 70% of BA students graduation within four years with a maximum 25% drop out rate after enrolment.

#### *4.1.7 Change in the pattern of enrolments*

The student numbers in the university have been steadily growing. The new entrants have nearly doubled over this period from nearly 5000 in 2004/05 to nearly 10000 in 2010/2011.

The number of international students for BA studies has significantly increased over years. In 2010, 500 students in English taught programs were enlisted, a 10% growth from the previous year. At the moment there is 1 program taught in English at the BA level, while 57 English taught Master programs are offered. International Office has been positively evaluated by students and it is open for both incoming international students and leaving Dutch students (on exchange programmes or on field trips/practical training abroad). International Office also provides policy advice to the faculties, administrative services and university top management.

#### *4.1.8 Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students*

The University takes care of diversity among its students via two different programs. A student dean together with a study advisor from one faculty has developed a pilot training of balanced life between studies and house. This program is directed towards mainly female students who come from the Turkish and other backgrounds are guided how to take responsibility of their own situation, how to find their own needs and how

to stand by oneself. The findings of this pilot program showed that two special courses need to be offered- one for the students coming from immigrant families, and another – for students from other cultures. In addition, the Buddy program was offered in the frame of the Summer school, where more senior Bachelor students together with the new students from the families with first generation going to higher education are getting to know each other and can discuss the issues of academic and social integration.

The University is actively promoting the right selection of students for the right study programmes through the Binding study advice starting in 2011/2012. The idea is to provide students who after one year are not successful with study advice which is binding to change the study programme. At the moment this new programme is discussed with different faculties regarding its concrete implementation steps.

## **5 Student Access in Case D institution (Big HBO institution)**

### **5.1 Description of student access at Case D institution**

#### *5.1.1 Institutional policy on access*

The institutional policy on access is in line with the national policy on access. Institution D strives in the future to have more international students in the system, in order to have a good balance between national and international student body.

The general criteria for access are that everyone in possession of the following secondary school diploma qualifies for admission at the institution D:

- MBO diploma (level 4),
- HAVO diploma (level 5)
- or a VWO diploma.

Whereas applicants with an MBO diploma (level 4) are entitled to be admitted to all Bachelor programs at this institution, the situation is different for students possessing an HAVO or a VWO diploma. Students studying for an HAVO or a VWO diploma have to select in the final stage of their secondary education either an economic or a technical-oriented learning profile. In these learning profiles, different subjects are studied more intensively and are meant to prepare students for a tertiary education later on. Some Bachelor programmes at institution D require that student can be admitted only with certain learning profiles. Institution D offers, however, the opportunity to compensate for missing requirements in a form of the so called ‘deficiency courses’. The successful completion of these courses qualifies students to enter into the Bachelor programme of



their choice (given that the learning profile was not matching correctly). If students fail a deficiency course, they do not qualify for admission to a study programme.

A special treatment is in place for applicants who are not in possession of a diploma and are above 21 years of age. These applicants can take a Colloquium doctum examination to demonstrate their knowledge.

Another distinct group of student population at this institution consists of international students. For admission, their diplomas have to be validated and compared to Dutch standards by the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic). In addition, international students need to proof their proficiency in Dutch and/or English. For Dutch-taught programs they need to demonstrate the possession of skills corresponding to the 'Staatsexamen NT2 level II'. For English-taught programmes a sufficient knowledge of English is requested, either in the form of an academic IELTS test (6.0), a TOEFL test (550) or an equivalent.

Next to these requirements the national regulation allows for special/additional requirements for certain study programmes. At institution D, the special requirements comprise for instance: writing a letter of motivation, attending an intake meeting, demonstrating creativity and/or technical skills, participation in a group work, or taking the tests to assess analytical skills and eloquence.

There is one study programme at institution D under the numerous fixus. In order to have a chance to get a place, students need to register for the programme prior to 15 May. If more applications are received than seats available lots are drawn by the DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs).

### 5.1.2 *Monitoring of access*

The student administration office is responsible for ensuring and monitoring access. In the first place, however, students need to apply for a study programme via the national portal as mentioned in the previous cases. Applicants fill in information regarding their educational background and select the study programme of their preference. In turn the student administration office at institution D receives this information and checks whether applicants qualify for the programme of their choice. Subsequently, the student administration office at institution D informs prospective students about the status of their application either by confirming the successful application or drawing attention to unfulfilled requirements. The student administration office also advises about the possibilities to follow a deficiency course or take a colloquium doctum.

For non-European Union students, the international office is responsible for issues related to access.

### 5.1.3 *Availability of access conditions and selection information*

Institution's website is the major channel for distributing information about study programmes to the secondary school sector. Next to the website containing all requirements for access, a number of admission information activities exist. These cover, on the one hand, the open days of institution D (four times a year); the welcoming of schools during which institution D introduces itself and provides information to potential students and; information afternoons especially for MBO students, discussing practical issues surrounding a study at institution D. On the other hand, the institution D has so called 'Meelopdagen', where potential students accompany enrolled student for a day and experience the student life. Secondary school student may also opt out for a study-try out days where potential students can attend real lectures and practical session within a certain time period attending the study programme of their choice.

There is also a longer-term support for students regarding their study choice. The so called orientation project (4 months duration) and 'tailor-made study guidance' are examples of this. During the course of these two projects potential students can talk to trainers and explore their interests. Finally institution D cooperates strongly with local secondary education institutions. In the final stage of their secondary education students from HAVO can chose to follow some classes at institution D. These classes are meant to show students the differences among a wider group of subjects. During the classes students get a case study to solve and are coached by teachers from institution D during this process. In addition, they can prepare their final project of the learning profile during these extra classes ('profielwerkstuk').

Next to these institutionalised activities, representatives of institution D meet regularly with secondary education institutions in the region to discuss the possibilities for further cooperation. Hereby the initiation of more pre-study/Bachelor courses is mentioned and the finding new learning paths.

These activities are meant to equip students with the necessary skills they need to attend a higher education institution, enable them to make a better and more conscious choice regarding their future and in turn reduce the high drop-out rate Dutch institutions face.

### 5.1.4 *Data on access*

The institution has one study programme with a limited number of places. Admission is consequently regulated by a numerus fixus. The data for the number of applicants is given to the institution. Over the last years this programme always received more applications than the number of places available.

The institution monitors data on the new enrolments per year for Bachelor and Master entrants. This data is specified according to full-time, part-time and dual education. In addition the institution differentiates between publicly funded and non-publically funded students. Institution D furthermore collects information on whether students enter at the propaedeutic phase or post propaedeutic phase.

**Table 1 Total Number New Enrolments**

Fulltime		Dual		Part-time		Total		Total growth
2010	2009	2010	2009	2010	2009	2010	2009	2009-2010
5.743	5.520	29	34	1.023	1.165	6.975	6.719	3.8%

Source: Annual Report 2010

The institution monitors the percentage of graduates of a certain cohort (date of enrolment) after five years. This information is further specialised by full-time student, part-time and dual education. In general terms, the graduation rate, after five years, for the respective cohorts is:

- cohort 2002- 57.3%,
- cohort 2003- 57.6%,
- cohort 2004 – 56.2%

(Source: Annual report 2010)

Looking at the different academic programs a rather diverse picture emerges per different year and subject, making it difficult to compare. For the 2005/06 cohort the graduation rate ranges per programme from 16% - 82% (Source: Internal Data).

Next to the graduation rate of a special cohort, the institution records the total number of graduations within a year, divided by full-time/ dual students, part-time students and number of academic programme.

**Table 2 Graduates (2009/2010)**

Fulltime/ Dual		Part-time		Total	
2009/2010	2008/2009	2009/2010	2008/2009	2009/2010	2008/2009
2771	2657	491	505	3262	3162

Source: Internal data Institution D

Furthermore the institution monitors the percentage of drop-outs after the first year of study. This is again distributed according to full-time/part-time/ dual and programme. In addition data is available on the total number of drop-outs within one year.

**Table 3 Number of Drop-outs**

Total		
2009/2010	2008/2009	2007/2008
2630	2541	2427

Source: Internal Data Institution D

### 5.1.5 *Disaggregate data on access*

The institution collects disaggregate data on enrolment rates by part-time and full-time students. In addition the number of disabled students is monitored. Within the cohort of 2010, 9.7% indicated that they are students with disabilities. As the three most common disabilities, dyslexia and dyscalculia (46%), psychological problems (11.7%) and chronic diseases (10.5%) have been mentioned. For students with disabilities, special support mechanisms are in place.

Institution D does not collect data on ethnicity; only data on nationality is collected. In total 13.562 new enrolments of international students have been registered at institution D over the last five years. Institution D does not collect information on the socio-economic backgrounds of students and on mature students

### 5.1.6 *Change in the pattern of enrolments*

Institution D saw an increase in enrolment over the last years. Seven years ago the institution reported a student body of 17.000 whereas these days the institution looks back on ca. 23.000 students. The new enrolments increase ca. 5-6% annually. To illustrate, in 2008 a total number of 5994 new enrolments were registered, while in 2009 the number accounts for 6031 and in 2010 new enrolment was 6381. In 2010, the student body consisted of ca. 18.900 full-time students, 100 students followed a dual education and 4.000 studied on a part-time basis.

The enrolments of international students increased significantly over the last five years. Whereas in 2006 the number of international students accounted for 1.980, in 2010, the enrolments steadily increased to 3.457. Among international students the most popular nationalities include German, Chinese, Norwegian, Iranian and Vietnamese students. Institution D registered in total 13.562 new enrolments of international students in the last five years. It is particularly the English speaking degree programs that saw their number of students increase. From the policy documents and interviews it is seen that the institution D strives in the future to admit even more international students.

### 5.1.7 *Support of admission and progression of distinct cohorts of students*

The institutional support is offered to students with disabilities and non-native Dutch speakers. Prior to starting their studies, students with disabilities can schedule a first meeting to discuss whether supporting measures are needed to achieve study progression. In addition every faculty has a contact person for students with disabilities whose role is to take care of special needs.

Supporting mechanisms refer to adjusted examination conditions and learning materials (additional time, bigger letter types, special rooms for students having a light allergy). They can also include hearing aid or special software packages for students with

dyslexia. The institution also offers a special mentor project for autistic students. Institution D has prepared a DVD for potential students with a handicap which can be ordered. In the 2010 cohort, 622 new students asked for this DVD. In the year 2010/2011 652 students with a disability have been supported. Foreign students can take Dutch language courses. In particular international students facing problems with using Dutch and those intending to improve their Dutch language skills can make use of this service.

## **6 Perceptions on student access in the case study institutions**

### *6.1.1 What are perceived to be the main drivers of change in student access?*

The key drivers for change in student access are the national policies on student selection and profiling and the changing popularity of certain programmes and disciplines. The increase in the international student numbers can be attributed to multiple factors, such as good marketing, relatively low tuition fees and attractiveness of the study programmes.

Institution D links the increase in the enrolment to wider pressures and national goals calling on people to be highly/tertiary educated. In addition the notably increase in the enrolment of international students is linked to the provision of English-taught Bachelor degree programmes at institution D. This is supplemented by the fact that an English-speaking education is considerably cheaper in the Netherlands compared to the United Kingdom. This makes the Netherlands an attractive country to study for international students. Furthermore institution D stresses the new and eased mobility within Europe especially from Eastern European countries. This mobility was not so easy ten years ago.

### *6.1.2 Issues surrounding access in the system*

The slowly shifting admissions policies of institutions and reaching the 50% participation target have proved to be problematic in the Netherlands. As noted by the OECD report (2006), access to higher education policy focuses too much on young students with a good prior education. Too little attention is paid to ethnic minorities and students from lower social economic backgrounds. The experts believed that the Netherlands will not succeed in boosting its higher education participation to 50% by 2010. As we observe today, the goal to reach 50% of labour force with higher education is now the ambition for 2050, as postulated by the current government as followed from the advice of the Dutch Educational Council (Kaiser and de Weert 2006).

The key perceived problem in the access to higher education in the Netherlands as seen from the four case studies is high drop-out rates in big institutions and the difficulty of new students to decide for a study. The institution experiences that a large number of new students seem to make an uninformed study choice and enrol at a last-minute stage. It is also these students that are more inclined to quit their studies after a couple of weeks, resulting in a rather high drop-out rate. This drop-out rate is very costly for the institutions. The key question is how to improve study choice of students.

For the future more attempts shall be made to reduce this number. This is manifested both in the institutional as well as national policy goals. The Dutch governmental strategic agenda points to the profiling of institutions and their programmes and the informed study choice for students to achieve a better match between the student's needs and the profile of the study programme.

Due to the above developments, institutions are increasingly concerned about the quality of students they admit and thus impose stricter policy on access. For example, a particular issue at the institution B is the inadequate level of languages and mathematics of newly enrolled Bachelor students. Institution D perceives the open access policy as problematic. The circumstance that the institution has to accept all students raises concerns of quality. Despite of the growing enrolment the institution perceives the need to enrol students who are well-informed. This institution in the future plans to start intake interviews for incoming students.

Institutions try to tackle the problem of the lack of selection by better informing the students both in the institutions and in the secondary schools, although the amount and type of mechanisms varies per institution. Several 'intake systems' are currently developed to support students with regard to their study choice (i.e.: study try out days). From the case studies we can observe that institutional management is very conscious about the problems related to student programme choice, possibilities for widening participation through life-long learning and drop-out rates in their institutions and they are attempts to find solutions to solve them.

To illustrate, currently institution D equals the diplomas of German applicants with MBO diplomas (level 4). In turn, German applicants have direct access to all Bachelor programs. The institution realises, however, that this is problematic, as there might be deficiencies in the German diplomas as well. This is considered not be a fair treatment compared to Dutch students: "It is easier to get in for a German student than for a Dutch student". The institution reports that also the differentiation among Dutch diplomas, especially the free access of students with an MBO-diploma, is disputed. Regarding the treatment of German diplomas, the Board of Directors calls upon the institution to revise the admission scheme. The institution expects that in the future a stricter management regarding the access of students will take place.

### 6.1.3 *Change in approach to the way institution manages quality*

Institutions have engaged over the last years in the quality assurance at different levels in the institution and realises its importance. The faculties and schools are encouraged to take care of the drop-out rates and to ensure the student satisfaction and increase the attractiveness of particular fields. As a response to the high drop-out rates over the last years, for example, institution D is increasingly involved in preparatory actions at the secondary education level. The institution constantly exchanges with representatives of the secondary level from the region, in order to discuss new developments and activities which can be undertaken. Although the effects of these activities are not yet substantial, the institution stresses the importance to further invest in these activities. Even stronger the institution recommends an altering of the approach how access/enrolment is managed at a national level. It is suggested to move the deadline for enrolment to early May and be able to have personal talks with the students about their study choice.

## 7 **Conclusion**

Given the general structure of secondary education and the different study profiles Dutch HE has a rather open system. The leading principle is that everyone given the standard entry qualifications has a right to enter higher education. Access to universities is open for students with a pre-university school-leaving certificate (VWO) or a hogescholen propaedeutic certificate. Admission to hogescholen is open to all students who hold the HAVO, MBO (upper level) or VWO certificate or any equivalent qualification. The only limitation to this “open system” in both the university and HBO sector is the system of *numerus fixus*, which applies to a limited number of study programmes, such as the medical studies (in Universities) and in the HBO for the paramedical subjects (e.g. physiotherapy), tourism, and arts. In case of a *numerus fixus* programme, students can be selected through a so-called weighted-lottery system and also through other selection mechanisms (assessment of individual capabilities, motivation for the study). The changes were introduced in 2000, when institutions got an opportunity to select up to 10% of their students in a decentralized way. This freedom for HE institutions to select their students on entrance has been extended over the years and institutions increasingly take the opportunity to do so. As perceived by the institutions, the key drivers for change in student access are the national policies on student selection, financial cuts coming from the government, less funding per student and the future expectation of demographic trends of decreasing student numbers in the country. This has resulted in institutions attracting foreign students into their English language programmes, recruiting students from wider backgrounds by providing them with mentoring and facilitator services. When it comes to minority students, their larger representation is noted in HBO sector rather than at universities. Overall, a steady increase in student numbers has been observed and institutions have been monitoring the student enrolments, progression, graduation and drop-outs on a regular basis partly because institutions receive funding for students only after their graduation.

## 7.1 Identified Barriers

In the Dutch higher education system due to its open access policies, strict barriers to higher education do not exist except for the formal entry qualifications. Access is becoming more a matter of institutional policies. Some institutions have recently announced that they do not want to grow anymore and aim to restrict their student enrolments in order to maintain quality. At the same time, enrolments are projected to increase as we have seen from our case study institutions. This may imply that the system as a whole becomes more selective, but it is too early to assess the implications in terms of access. Still, a number of relative barriers to higher education access and widening participation may be pointed out:

1. The slowly shifting admissions policies of institutions and reaching the 50% participation target have proved to be problematic in the Netherlands. Access to higher education policy focuses too much on young students with a good prior education.
2. High drop-out rates is a barrier for widening participation in the Netherlands.
3. It is difficult to match students with an appropriate study programme and institution due still limited capacity regarding matching the needs of students with the programmes on offer (the selection policies is rather new and it is early to see the barrier of implementation here).
4. In the open access system the institutions are concerned about the quality of students they admit.
5. In terms of international students, institutions require validation of foreign diplomas and certain language proficiency, which may be a barrier for the access of international students to the HEIs in the Netherlands.

## 7.2 Recommendations

- Institutions need to balance between the stricter access policies to ensure quality of prospective students within the frame of reference of open access via the matching of the students with respective study programmes using the means of coaching and other advising instruments.
- Institutions need to develop stronger administrative capacities to be able to coach prospective students and to match them with the appropriate study programmes.
- Access should be more open to life-long learning possibilities and accommodate all age groups and not only focus on the traditional students in full-time study programmes.



## 8 References

Annual Reports of the four institutions 2010

Cremonini , L., Leisyte, L. Weyer, E. and Vossensteyn, H. 2011 Student Selection in Nine Countries. A Thematic Monitor report. Enschede: CHEPS.

Guides for undergraduate applicants

HBO-raad, Facts and Figures, 2010, The Hague: HBO raad.

Institutional Facts and Figures 2010

Internal university regulations on student access

Interviews

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Min. OC&W), (2011) *Kwaliteit in Verscheidenheid.Strategische Agenda Hoger Onderwijs, Onderzoek en Wetenschap*, the Hague: OCW.

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Min. OC&W) (2009) *Kennis in Kaart 2009*. The Hague: OCW.

Protocol ‘Studying with a handicap’

Veerman C.P. et al. (2010) *Differentieren in drievoud*. The Hague: OCW.

De Weert and Boezerroy (2007) *Higher Education in the Netherlands*. The Higher Education Monitor Report. Enschede: CHEPS.

Websites of the four institutions

- a. Pages on Access requirements
- b. Pages containing Information for new students