

It's all refreshingly informal

Dutch universities ask for a motivation letter, CV and grades. Once you've found where you want to go, just apply directly

By STEPHEN HOARE

The Netherlands is an attractive study option for UK undergraduates. With some degrees fully taught in English, high academic standards and lower fees, Dutch universities offer UK students an exciting cultural experience coupled with an internationally recognised degree. The country now offers 1,560 university programmes taught in English including Bachelors, Masters and PhD degrees. "We've seen a sharp increase in UK students for our Masters programmes and also some for our Bachelors as well," says Adri Meijdam, executive director of the BSc in international business administration at Rotterdam School of Management (RSM).

The Netherlands is just a short hop across the North Sea, and transport links are good. Amsterdam University, in the centre of the city, is half an hour's train ride from the Netherlands' major hub, Schiphol Airport. "UK students would spend more time travelling in to London from the suburbs than the 25 minutes it takes to fly from Schiphol to Heathrow," says Hans Hulst, the university's international communications and marketing adviser.

Haider Anwar from East London got into RSM at Clearing and is studying for a BSc in international business administration. "My grades were not enough to secure me a place at my two first-choice UK universities so I looked up the FT MBA rankings and found RSM offered Bachelors degrees and was ranked number seven in Europe," he says.

He then looked up RSM's website and rang the international admissions office. The office confirmed that his grades - A, A, B in maths, business and psychology - were enough to get him in.

Anwar takes up the story. "They asked me for a motivation letter which I composed within the hour and emailed over. Then they asked me to send a copy of my CV and my grades. And when they told me the tuition fee was €1,700 I was taken aback: it didn't seem high at all for such a fabulous university. I packed my bags and left within four days of receiving their offer."

The whole process was stress free. The university found Anwar a room on campus for £100 a week. His parents helped by paying the tuition fee for the entire year up front, but living costs and student accommodation have to be paid from an international student account, which Anwar set up.

"You are part of a very international student community," Anwar says. "The standards expected are high and even though I have enrolled in Dutch language classes pretty much everyone speaks English. I would



Another alternative is to register with the web-based enrolment system Studielink GETTY IMAGES

compare the academic standards with those at Oxford or Cambridge. It's a demanding course but I know that the experience that comes from studying at an international university will help me stand out when I start my career in finance."

Most Dutch universities offer degrees taught in English for subjects such as business, law and economics. RSM offers four Bachelors degrees in business, economics, econometrics and media and communication. The tuition fee of €1,771 is standard for all EU students and UK students are even eligible for a Dutch government student loan provided they work part-time for at least 32 hours a month.

The University of Leiden has 85 UK Bachelors and Masters students on its English taught programmes. Humanities, law, medicine, science and social sciences are all offered. The university and Leiden University College in the Hague operate an online applications system. "The deadline is 15 June for UK students on programmes starting in September and 1 December for programmes starting in February. If stu-

dents require housing there is an earlier deadline of April for a September start. Admission requirements vary according to programme and we offer open days in which prospective students can learn more about our university and our city. It's a safe city and a relaxed social environment," says Jessica Brouwer, the international marketing adviser.

Leiden offers a customised curriculum in which students can mix and match options according to their study interests. Emma Garthwaite, a Bachelors student in English and linguistics from Edinburgh University, is spending a year in Leiden as part of the EU Erasmus exchange programme and is impressed by the teaching experience. "It's a completely different style of learning compared with the UK. Classes tend to be smaller and there is more emphasis on discussion and critical thinking. Dutch students are encouraged to challenge their teachers," says Garthwaite.

Amsterdam University offers just one English-taught Bachelors degree, in economics and business. Hans Hulst says: "We have 2,000

international students out of a total of 30,000. We have had a big increase in applications from the UK and in the last few months interest has risen enormously."

UK students can look to see which degrees are available on websites such as Studielink (www.studielink.nl), the Netherlands' equivalent to Ucas, which also gives advice on how to apply for a course.

In the first instance, UK students are advised to research Dutch universities online and apply direct to the university of their choice. According to the QS World University Ranking 2011, the Netherlands' top 10 includes Utrecht University, Leiden University, University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, Erasmus University (which includes Rotterdam School of Management) and the University of Maastricht.

The alternative is to register first with the web-based enrolment system Studielink and then apply through the university website as well. International students not resident in the Netherlands will have to create their own Studielink account and will be issued with a username

and password. Students applying directly or via Studielink will be sent e-mail notification.

Anwar's application process may have been fast-track but it conforms in every way with the standard practice in the Netherlands of requiring students to provide a letter of motivation, a CV and grades.

Applying to a Dutch university is refreshingly informal. "We make our offer based on achieved grades in the first year of A level," says RSM's Meijdam. He adds that in Holland there is a natural bias towards the international baccalaureate (IB). "Students with an IB fit pretty well into our programme. We ask for a combined subject score of 30-33. And we are keen on mathematics and English so we expect a minimum of grade 5 for those subjects."

So when should you apply? The best time to begin the process is now according to Amsterdam's Hans Hulst. Most Bachelors students apply to Dutch universities between January and April. "The cut-off for applications for a Bachelors degree is 1 May and for a Masters degree it's 1 April," says Hulst.

www.nhtv.nl

Meet us at
The Student World Fair in London
 Saturday 17th March

English-taught (academic) bachelor and master programmes in the disciplines of

Facility Games Hotel
 Imagineering Leisure Logistics
 Media Mobility Tourism

NHTV
 P.O. Box 3917
 4800 DX Breda
 T +31 76 533 22 03
 F +31 76 533 22 05
 www.nhtv.nl

Facebook.com/NHTVBreda

54 CAMPUSES WORLDWIDE

AMSTERDAM

ROTTERDAM

AUDIO ENGINEERING

DIGITAL FILM MAKING

CROSS-MEDIA COMMUNICATION

WEBDESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

INTERACTIVE ANIMATION

ALL COURSES TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

THE GLOBAL STANDARD IN CREATIVE MEDIA EDUCATION

WWW.SAE.EDU