

FAQ: Universities make joint proposal on internationalisation

What exactly is the offer?

All of the universities in the Netherlands have made a joint offer to the minister and the House of Representatives under the flag of UNL.

- Decrease in international Bachelor's inflow (max. 16,750 students in the coming years, - 11% compared to 2023-2024).
- Convert English-language Bachelor's programmes, especially in Psychology, Economics and Business Administration, to Dutch only or bilingual.
- Lower numerus fixus on large English-language programmes.
- Maintain and specifically strengthen international inflow in shortage sectors (such as technology, science, AI, teacher training).
- Discontinue some English-language tracks (e.g. in Medicine, Pharmacy, Comparative European History).
- Improve Dutch language proficiency among students and staff.
- Restraint in recruiting international students.
- More attention to student housing and preparation for the labour market.

We will only do this if the TAO for existing courses is taken off the table.

What does this mean for the UvA?

- The language of instruction for Psychology Bachelor's programmes in the Randstad area (which includes the UvA) will be converted from English to Dutch.
- The intake for the English-language track of the Business Administration and Economics and Business Economics Bachelor's programmes will be limited to a maximum of 1,200 using a numerus fixus.
- A Dutch-language track can be introduced for other Bachelor's programmes so that, if necessary, a numerus fixus can be set for an English-language track. This will allow us to better manage the intake.
- The total international intake at the UvA will decrease by 20 percent due to these measures and the decrease that has already been initiated.
- International students and staff will receive extra support to learn Dutch. This will increase their chances of staying here after graduation and contributing to Dutch society.

Will people lose their jobs? If so, how many and at which faculties?

The UvA and the other universities are making this offer precisely to prevent large-scale layoffs. The alternative is that the test for foreign-language education would in all probability rigorously put an end to English-language education and that that would lead to many job losses. This offer is intended to prevent that scenario.

At the same time, the offer will also reduce the inflow of international students to our university. The UvA believes that this can be absorbed through natural outflow because the measures will not be implemented overnight.

When will the measures be implemented?

An exact timeline can only be arrived at once the universities receive clarity from The Hague: the mandatory *Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs* (TAO) (Foreign Language Education Test) must be removed from the proposed law. Only then will there be sufficient certainty for universities to actually be able to implement the steps listed in the offer. Changing a *numerus fixus* needs sufficient lead time, so that would have an effect from 2026-2027 at the earliest. Programme changes (such as language conversions) can be introduced from 2027-2028, due to the necessary transition times.

How much will the international intake be reduced?

The entire set of measures will result in an international Bachelor's intake of a maximum of 16,750 students, which is 11% lower than the intake in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Can students who are currently doing the English-language Bachelor's degree in Psychology complete their studies?

Yes, all students can complete their studies. Universities will ensure the transition is made with all due care.

How did the universities arrive at these choices?

The political and social debate about the large international influx into Dutch higher education and the importance of the Dutch language has been going on for some time. The UvA also believes it is important to safeguard accessibility for Dutch students and to maintain Dutch as an academic language. At the same time, the university is an international institution with a diverse community. Dutch education and research flourish partly because of this international character. We have made this offer proactively in order to take responsibility for extensive internationalisation. The offer allows us to create certainty for (prospective) students and researchers, and to continue to attract and retain the international talent we need in the Netherlands. This is internationalisation that works for the Netherlands.

The most important thing is that the *Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs* (TAO) (Foreign Language Education Test) is taken off the table, because its application would mean that almost all English-language Bachelor's programmes at the UvA are in danger of disappearing. The universities have therefore made an offer to the minister to take into account the societal debate and at the same time ensure that higher education remains attractive.

Are other universities also taking measures?

Yes, all other universities in the Netherlands are also taking measures. For example, all Bachelor's programmes in Psychology in the Randstad will be Dutch-language. *Numerus fixuses* will also be used for other English-language programmes. On [the UNL \(Universities of the Netherlands\) website](#), you can read about the complete package of measures encompassing all universities (in Dutch).

These measures will result in an international Bachelor's inflow of a maximum of 16,750 students, which is 11% lower than the inflow in the 2022-2023 year.

Why were these programmes chosen?

These are large programmes, with a large international inflow, and relatively few international students who go on to do a Master's degree in the Netherlands after their Bachelor's programme ends and/or progress into the labour market. These measures should lead to a better balance of internationalisation at universities and approximately 2,000 fewer international Bachelor's students each year. This academic year, a total of more than 17,000 international Bachelor's students entered the Dutch system.

Should universities do more to improve Dutch language proficiency?

Universities will do more to improve the Dutch language proficiency of students and staff. There was already a language requirement of C1 level for international lecturers who provide education in Dutch. Furthermore, all international academic staff who do not teach in Dutch will now also be encouraged to learn Dutch at B1 level. In addition, more language courses will be offered to international students. Improvement in Dutch language proficiency should also ensure that more international students continue to live and work in the Netherlands after graduating.

What will happen if the universities' joint proposal is not accepted?

The Balanced Internationalisation bill threatens to strictly regulate the internationalisation of higher education. If the proposed law is passed, it will become almost impossible for the UvA to offer Bachelor's programmes in English. This would have major consequences. Many English-language Bachelor's programmes would disappear, with major consequences for the quality and diversity of education. The culprit in the proposed legislation is the *Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs* (TAO) (Foreign Language Education Test), which assesses all existing Bachelor's programmes to see whether it is necessary to teach them in English. The conditions are not yet entirely clear, but it is expected that the test will be very strict and that only a few existing Bachelor's programmes would pass. The TAO would therefore mean an untargeted devastation of education.

Does the UvA also think that there are too many foreign students?

The UvA has seen the influx of international students increase enormously in recent years. The university had too few targeted instruments to regulate this inflow in English-language Bachelor's programmes, which sometimes caused problems such as overcrowded lecture halls or pressure on student facilities. The UvA therefore also wants ways to get a grip on the international influx so that we can guarantee the quality and accessibility of education for Dutch students. The new option of *numerus fixus* on a foreign-language track would give the university the tools necessary to get such a grip.