

WHAT ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN IN 2006 AND BEYOND?

University of Groningen, in Dutch: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen or RUG

www.rug.nl

For more facts & figures, please refer to the powerpoint presentation or the latest overview of international programmes.

General introduction

Introduction Office for International Relations RUG

Bologna and RUG:

- Bachelor-master structure*
- Major-minor*
- ECTS and ECTS label*
- Diploma Supplement and DS label*

Other effects of internationalisation

RUG ambitions

1 INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN, GRONINGEN

Thanks to its privileged geographic location, the old hanseatic city of Groningen has been a centre of international trade, business, culture and education for centuries. It is also the home of one of the earliest research universities in Europe. Since its inception in 1614, the University of Groningen (RUG) enjoys a truly international reputation for being a dynamic and successful centre of higher education with high quality teaching and research. The university today combines modern facilities and a dynamic approach to teaching and research with its proud heritage of service and achievement. Some 23,000 students are currently enrolled in a full range of degree programmes at Bachelor's, Master's and PhD level in all fields. The University's breadth of expertise in research and research-led teaching encompasses: the humanities; the natural, behavioural, physical, health, life, social and technology sciences.

Outstanding students are given the opportunity to take specific modules to intensify their knowledge and broaden their scope. In addition to the regular programmes, RUG offers various Research Master's programmes that are associated with (17) Graduate Schools and constitute the perfect introduction to related 4-year PhD programmes.

Having gained national and international understanding, the vision of the University of Groningen is to be recognized as a world-class university and to achieve the associated benefits for its students, staff and all other stakeholders. Therefore, internationalization is an integral part of the university's policy, which is reflected in its teaching and research, its student population and other activities. The RUG has established long-term partnerships with selected universities all over the world and participates in many international networks. The Double degree programmes offer students the additional experience of studying in different countries as part of these programmes can or will be followed at a partner university abroad.

The student population and staff are drawn from throughout the world and a variety of backgrounds, attracted by its international reputation and commitment to innovation and excellence in all areas of activity. Every year around 2,300 students from at least 95 countries find their way to the University of Groningen, where English has been the language of instruction for more than 70 different programmes.

The university's strong influence on its surroundings becomes clear when visiting Groningen. One of every five inhabitants of Groningen is a student, as a result of which Groningen offers a wide range of facilities in sports, culture and recreation. Library, state-of-the-art computers and wide access to any learning resource, like the Blackboard, are available for all students, staff and alumni. By providing the students assistance in matters concerning daily life, organizing language courses, workshops and many other social activities, the University of Groningen plays an important role of being an Alma Mater.

2 INTRODUCTION OF THE CENTRAL OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Central Office for International relations advises the Board of the University, cooperates with decentralized international offices (established at the level of the departments), facilitates university activities and manages internal and external projects.

About 18 FTE, some 22 people (most staff involved in several fields). Main tasks:

- Internationalisation policy design and implementation (in view of local, Dutch, European and global changes), strategies and international networks
- Institutional agreements and non-degree exchange programmes world wide, staff exchange
- International marketing and degree mobility
- International Service Desk (incoming and outgoing students, visa procedures, insurance, housing, social support, admissions for degree programmes)

Development Cooperation projects (four to twelve-year programmes in Mozambique, South Africa, Eritrea, Tanzania, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Vietnam, Indonesia, Ghana, and Zambia).

3 BOLOGNA AND RUG

See also: http://www.cepes.ro/information_services/sources/on_line/bologna.htm

In short, Bologna means striving for comparable degrees, a 2-cycle system (Ba-Ma structure), and the introduction of a credit system (ECTS), increased mobility of students and staff, and European Quality Assurance.

Bologna is high on the agenda, we are all aware of the need for compatible and transparent systems. We are also very much aware that internationalisation enhances research and education, and that it is a quality instrument that can make the institution more competitive.

RUG introduced the BA-MA structure in 2003. There are now 60 Bachelor's degree programmes, and about 120 Master's degree programmes. The break between the two cycles is soft for students cannot allow themselves to lose too much time. RUG explicitly stimulates its students to continue and do a master's programme as well. Of the 120 programmes, some 70 are taught entirely in English.

Until 2003, it took students 4 or 5 years to graduate from a Dutch doctoral programme. The title issued would be drs. (doctorandus), ir (ingenieur) or mr (meester, for law). This corresponds to MA/MSc/LL.M.

Those students who are allowed to enter the University do not do an entrance exam. The type of secondary school diploma they obtain is decisive. Only the highest type of high school (Atheneum or Gymnasium, 6-year programmes) grants direct access to a research university such as the University of Groningen. The level of these students compares more or less to American students who have already had 2 years of American university education. Also, research universities in the Netherlands tend to specialize from year 1. Most Dutch universities, however, are thinking of introducing major-minor models too (see below***).

BA/BSc/LL.B programmes are three-year, flexible programmes granting access to several master's degree programmes. As a matter of fact, we do not know the market value of a bachelor's degree too well yet; labour market surveys will make that clear. In any case, bachelor's degree programmes at research universities will contain research methodology training and an academic thesis (other than is the case for bachelor's degrees awarded by Dutch universities of applied sciences).

MA/MSc programmes take 1 to 2 years. All natural sciences master's programmes and research master's programmes take 2 years. A master's degree in the medical sciences takes three years.

RUG is implementing a number of programmes with international partners: Uppsala (Sweden), Fudan (China), ITB (Bandung, Indonesia), GMU (Yogyakarta, Indonesia). RUG is also looking for new partners. The contents matter, it is not about nice words.

*** RUG is now about to introduce the major-minor system in the bachelor's cycle of 8 of its 10 faculties (Law and Medical Sciences are not included). A major consists of 150 ECTS, a minor of 30 ECTS. The aim of this model is to broaden the scope and the student's perspective, but also to provide students with additional academic skills. The minor can be multidisciplinary or monodisciplinary. The minor allows domestic students to go abroad, and international students to come in.

The Ba-Ma structure has been implemented. It has been a great strain on staff, who are also expected to do research (conflicting interests, because the EU wants research to be more competitive, too).

4 BOLOGNA AND THE UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS)

Two tools to increase "transparency" in European higher education and to improve recognition of study points and/or degrees (whether or not obtained abroad).

ECTS

= European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

1 ECTS equals 28 hours (including preparation, contact hours, papers and exams)

1 academic year in Europe equals 60 ECTS

The ECTS label can be obtained in case the higher education institute complies with the rules set by the European Commission for the use of ECTS. This means that a complete

study guide and course catalogue should be provided both in Dutch as well as in English: general information on RUG, general information on all programmes and courses, short description of all courses, and general information for students. For non-English speaking institutions this means a great deal of work in order to get the exact equivalent of the subject titles as well as be consistent in the translations provided. Next to the study guide and course catalogue the institution should make use of transcripts of records and learning agreements. In case all this is done correctly, and the label obtained, this can be used as a marketing instrument as it shows that a university is a trustworthy partner.

For years now, RUG courses have been described in ECTS. After discussing the issue of the ECTS label (after all, we are Dutch, and why even describe Dutch courses in English? It might mislead people who think that certain courses are really offered in English), RUG decided to go ahead with the process and is now finalising the availability of a course catalogue, in English, on the internet.

Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, contents, and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which the supplement is appended. It is free from any value-judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve international "transparency" and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (also of those obtained abroad). It will also allow students to gain easier access to the labour market.

Implementing the DS is mostly a technical process involving academic staff. RUG started the process in 2003. The International Relations Office, Admissions Office, the legal department and the Computing Centre were involved. RUG has had to decide on the layout, the translations (dynamic, there are over 2000 courses), adapt the degrees and train personnel. This process was both costly and laborious, yet as from 15 October 2005, the University of Groningen issues a Diploma Supplement, automatically and free of charge, to every student (bachelor and master) upon graduation. The diploma is provided both in Dutch (Bul) and in English (Degree Certificate); the Diploma Supplement is issued in English only and contains the transcript of records.

In August 2006 the European Commission awarded the Diploma Supplement Label to RUG (as the only institution in the Netherlands).

It is unclear yet, but future funding (e.g. of projects) by the European Commission may depend on whether institutions are in possession of the ECTS and DS labels or not.

Quality Assurance (regular and international programmes)

There is no European institution as yet that checks the quality of European universities. Departments of Dutch universities used to be visited by national peer committees. Only qualified institutions are subsidized by the Dutch Ministry of Education. Today, there is a Dutch-Flemish accreditation committee that controls the quality (NVAO).

As for internationalisation, all European institutions are supposed to implement Bologna and to have an internationalisation policy, but this is not part of the accreditation process, for now.

RUG wants internationalisation to permeate all levels of the university. It is obvious that it enhances teaching and research, but it also influences administrative personnel, even the

city of Groningen (systems approach 2005 versus exchange programmes and development cooperation of the 1980s and 1990s).

Internal quality assurance: Needless to say that the University of Groningen has a protocol to guarantee the quality of all its programmes. RUG also made checklists on how to achieve superior quality in all aspects of internationalisation, for instance on how to:

- set up an internationalisation policy;
- deal with international guests;
- deal with crisis;
- guarantee high quality social/academic supervision;
- work with strategic partners;
- deal with admissions;
- organize information.

External quality: RUG strives at being monitored by peers. The law programmes are already monitored by the American Bar. In joint programmes partner universities check the quality of the programmes.

5 INTERNATIONALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION

The University of Groningen is engaged in an ambitious internationalisation exercise. It has been quite active in the field of internationalisation in the past decades but it will set its targets even higher in the years to come. An internationalisation policy covers a range of activities and involves partner universities all over the world. What has perhaps always characterized the University of Groningen (RUG) is that it not only involves the established industrialized world but that it has always intended to open up a truly global network of partner universities. This contributes to making the RUG an attractive environment for both students and staff.

English skills: as more than 70 programmes are taught in English, all RUG staff in those programmes is submitted to language tests. If their skills are insufficient, they have to take courses.

Multi/cross-cultural skills training programmes are offered to staff and students. New staff are selected on the basis of academic skills and international experience.

The central **International Service Desk (ISD)** was opened in 2002. It takes care of visa, immigration procedures, (health) insurance, banks, et cetera. The ISD answers all general questions on living and studying in Groningen.

Internationalisation at home is an important issue: what can we do to make all staff and students world citizens, whether they travel or stay in Groningen.

Graduate schools (17) will train both research master's degree students and PhD students, while until recently all research was organized in separate institutes.

Strategic partners: RUG has a wide global network and many agreements. Uppsala, Unam (Mexico), ITB Bandung (Indonesia), Fudan (China), Osaka, Tokyo are considered strategic partners. RUG is now strongly focusing on agreements with North American partners, too.

Double degrees/joint degrees, RUG is offering double degrees with ITB, GMU, and Fudan and offering several master's programmes with other institutions. Three have been selected by Erasmus Mundus: Humanitarian Assistance, Euroculture and Clinical

Linguistics. Joint degree programmes are not yet possible, as Dutch legislation does not allow for it yet.

International marketing Although numbers are not important in themselves, RUG is fairly actively recruiting worldwide. The overall goal is quality and diversification. With other Dutch institutions we try to provide a clearer image of what the Netherlands stand for (Netherlands Education Support Offices in several countries).

Africa network and (educational or research) cooperation with universities in developing countries or transition economies

As for its relations with Asia and Africa, the RUG has built a remarkable network of partners in the past three decades. Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and China are among our oldest relations. Among the African countries that RUG has worked with or is still working with are Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Mozambique, Ghana and South Africa. With the introduction of NFP and NPT, the new development cooperation programmes of the Dutch government, new African and Asian partners have been introduced. Hopefully however, these will, in line with the general policy of the University of Groningen, also become long-term partners. It is our firm belief that academic relationships, whether these involve educational or research cooperation, should be long-term in order to be sustainable.

6 RUG GOALS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

- 50% of our students must have spent a period of 3 months or more abroad (partner institutions are essential!);
- increase of incoming students to 5000 students (degree seeking and exchange students) in 2015, of as many nationalities as possible (now about 2200 annually, 95 nationalities, fairly large though not too large number of Germans, Chinese and Indonesians);
- integrated approach: internationalisation is part of every aspect of RUG education, research and life;
- solid cooperation with partners worldwide;
- top-25 of Europe.