



## European Baccalaureate (EB) Diploma and admission to Universities in NL

Help for parents of pupils of ESB

### WHY THIS DOCUMENT?

This document is for parents who want to help their child with school choices in S5 and University choices. It is meant to add to the material that the school provides and not replace it.

### PAC

ESB Parent's Association

## European Baccalaureate (EB) Diploma and admission to Unis in NL

Getting into Dutch Universities is sometimes seen as more complex than for example getting into English Universities which has a centralized system called UCAS. This document we hope, helps parents understand how they can support their kid on entering Dutch Universities - it is meant as supporting material on top of the material provided by the European school career counselors – in fact this document was checked for accuracy by ESB staff.

To start with it is good to know that the EB diploma is the same as a Dutch VWO diploma. Nuffic the organisation that validates international diplomas in the Netherlands states that the EB diploma is the equivalent of the VWO diploma in Holland. VWO is the highest level of general secondary education available in the Netherlands ([Education system European Baccalaureate | Nuffic](#)) Also good to remember that ESB provides an inclusive educational environment that is available for all children of all levels (unlike the Dutch school system with schools for different academic levels) – ESB aims to match the different needs that different students have at different ages - which is a tough thing to pull off.

According to the alumni data of ESB on the ESB website [Vervolgstudies.pdf \(esbergen.eu\)](#) – 80% of ESB graduates stay in the Netherlands and apply to Dutch Universities for international studies either in English or Dutch – like the VU, UVA, TUDelft, Erasmus, RU Groningen. They study a variety of bachelor programme from European studies, business studies, engineering, law, politics, life sciences, medicine etc. With the majority entering English language international business studies courses around Holland. Since 2019 no ESB students has studied in the UK perhaps due to Brexit. Note: This data is based on what students state they are applying for, not if they graduated from that programme.

In 2023 ESB celebrated the [PISA](#) results - achieving higher than average levels in reading, maths and science than EU schools and later that same year the school celebrated 100% of ESB pupils passing the [BAC](#) at a grade 5 or higher. The final grade for the Baccalaureate is made up of 50% from scores on preliminary examinations in S7, including tests and course work. The other 50% of the final grade for BAC come from 35% written examinations in five subjects (Language 1, Language 2, Mathematics and two electives) and 15% oral examinations in three subjects that are based on work in the final two years of study S6 & S7. This differentiation in written and oral grade is important to be aware of for university programme choice – because in the Netherlands more and more University offering International programmes will select students in the future.

### Dutch University System Differences

The Netherlands is unique from some other European countries with its different types of universities – fundamental or academic Universities (WO) and higher vocational education (HBO) applied Universities. The main differences between WO and HBO are the following:

HBO	WO
How	Why
Preference for personal guidance	Independent worker
Clear career perspective	Focused on a graduation profile – for master's & PhD
Internship necessary	Internship possible
Mainly 4 years	Mostly 3 years
Many group projects field related assignments	Mostly independent assignments or interdisciplinary assignments
Mbo-4, havo, VWO, IB, EB	VWO, IB, EB, HBO
Middle study tempo	High study tempo
Competency learning	Knowledge learning
Links to directly apply theory	Prefers to develop new knowledge

If your child is more of a “doer” and less academic, and perhaps prefers working in groups and wants real work experience and less reading – they should think carefully about their choice for an applied HBO University instead of a WO University.

### University Application Process

To get into Dutch Universities the EB diploma will provide access. Depending on the University programme, there is a central enrollment with unlimited places or alternatively limited places, with a selection process, which is known as a ‘numerus fixus’.

These University programmes select and rank the applicants for the limited places available. Both WO or HBO University programmes that do not have a numerus fixus, are guaranteed if applicant has evidence of a relevant high school diploma.

During the first University year (Prodedeuse year) the student will need to gain a minimum number of credits (ECT's) to get to be allowed to continue to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the study (this may be 60 credits or lower depending on the specific course). The drop out rate in the first year is on average between 25% - 50% but often lower for programmes with a numerus fixus. If the student doesn't obtain sufficient ECT's by a certain date, the student will be given a binding negative study advise (BSA) and can no longer continue with the year 2 or return to the programme.

Due to the recent change of government in the Netherlands the amount of WO and HBO programmes (especially in English) that have a numerus fixus may increase. Here is an overview of all the numerus fixus studies in the Netherlands in 2024/2025 [Overzicht numerus fixusopleidingen 2024-2025 \(studiekeuze123.nl\)](https://studiekeuze123.nl/overzicht-numerus-fixusopleidingen-2024-2025)

Normally speaking grades on your high school diploma are not relevant to get into University. For those bachelor programme with numerus fixus, the requirement for certain level of grades might be used to select according to multiple sources. However, we didn't hear this when we

approached the admission offices of the top Dutch Universities in the Netherlands - to establish how they view the EB diploma compared with the VWO Dutch diploma and if certain grades were necessary. The email reactions from TU Delft (bouwkunde – architecture and engineering studies), University of Utrecht (diergeneeskunde – veterinary studies), VU MS (geneeskunde – medicine), Erasmus MC (geneeskunde – medicine) and Raboud University (Tandheelkunde – dentistry) were encouraging: ***“It doesn’t matter if the applicant studies VWO or EB – they are the same level, however the applicant must choose the right profile for the course. Currently we do not use grades in our selection. It is important that applicants do well in the selection day like all other prospective students.”***

Some University programmes (including medicine) require a written examination in the 3 science subjects, something which is not possible in the ES system – the only alternative is for the student to take an additional written paper in the EB – for which they need to submit a formal request to ES central office by September of year S7.

While searching on admission websites of top Universities in the Netherlands it appeared that some Universities do not include mention of the EB on their admission pages, they include the IB and details for other non-Dutch diplomas, but not the EB diploma – so it is good for your child to email them for confirmation of requirements.

### [Studying Bachelor in non-Native Language](#)

The uniqueness of the European school system is that the curriculum is delivered in different languages – meaning that pupils at ES Bergen leave the school speaking fluently in their first choice of language - French or Dutch or English (L1) and fluently in their chosen second language (L2), and speaking a good level in their third language (L3) and fourth language (L4).

This is also where admission to universities might become more complex as universities are not used to students coming with multiple languages at L2 and L3 level and find it complex to compare to the local system – some universities do specify on their websites that L2 is enough if it is taken in 4 subjects per week at L2 level. But it doesn’t appear that L3 language will allow admission into the University using that language unless the applicant takes an additional test. Some universities will anyway ask for the applicant to take a TEFL or IELTS language test to prove their level of local language or English to get into courses in the Netherlands where minimum level 6 or 7 is required to meet the requirements for the University course. Some Universities don’t require an EB graduate to do the IETLS if they scored a grade 8 or 9 in English L1 or L2. Carefully researching the requirements per programme is essential to be prepared to meet the admission deadline – as sometimes TEFL or IELTS language tests take a while to arrange.

## EB BAC grade comparison

The additional complication for admission offices at universities is the EB grading system - which changed in 2018 - and was supposed to make a clearer distinction between sufficient and satisfactory grade and comparison to grading systems in other countries. Which means that in the ES a pass is at a grade 5 - in the Dutch system a pass is at a 6 grade. A grade 9-10 (excellent) is the equivalent to a grade 8.5-10 in VWO and a grade 5-5.99 in EB is the same as the grade 6 in VWO according to Nuffic comparison charts. For comparison saks - A grade 9.71 in EB is considered the equivalent of an [A\\*A\\*A\\* grade in UK A level terms](#). Important to note VWO pupils take a similar number of subjects to the EB and A-levels are done in 3-5 subjects whereas pupils of the EB study 10-13 subjects.

NL WVO	EB BAC
8.5-10	9-10 Excellent
8-8,4	8-8.99 Very good
7.1-7.9	7-7.99 Good
6.5-7	6-6.99 Satisfactory
6	5-5.99 Sufficient
<6	3-4.99 Failed (Weak)
<<6	0-2.99 Failed (very weak)

Some numerus fixus programmes in the Netherlands sometimes require a minimum grade (often a minimum overall grade 7 at EB diploma). Otherwise, they do require the prospective students to undergo a selection so the university can decide who gets the limited places. In that case the prospective student is placed on a ranking determined by data (usually the entrance exam grade) and potentially put on the waiting list for places. The requirements to enter are different per programme and sometimes it is unclear. It is advised to ask for clarity on this before applying – often the rules and regulations for admission for numerus fixus studies can be found in a not easy to find PDF on the Universities website – use google to search for “regeling voor numerus fixus en selectie” + university name + programme name + “Studentenstatuut 202X”.

## Numerus Fixus Selection Processes

The selection for these numerus fixus programmes might include interviews, personality test, maths exams, case open question exams, homework preparation, group discussions, intelligence tests, presentations and sports tests – this differs depending on the programme and subject requirements. Additional requirements might include a GPA (grade point average) or minimum grade required for certain subjects with a written exam (not oral exam) taken during the last 2 years of the EB programme. But this is normally specified clearly on the admission pages of the University. University courses like medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy, veterinarian studies are often numerus fixus with a physical selection day on location at the University. Sometimes they have higher requirements in terms of subject/package, GPA or

minimum grade per subject. However, the minimum grade 7 at EB is quoted most often on University website admission pages. Further research by pupils and their parents is advised to delve deeper into the programme of interest. Parents are advised to get their child to ask the admission office for official written confirmation of the criteria used and data points used to determine the ranking for the limited places – this data should be made available to you (as it is data about the applicant). Parents are also advised to practice interview situations with their child if the selection includes an interview – in these situations the ranking will be determined by their character, story telling and motivation and not just their academic level.

### Example Selection Requirements

Groningen University medicine and veterinary studies the applicant is required to have Maths 5 (6 periods), biology (4 periods), and physics and these must have been final year courses with a final written exam (not oral test).

University Leiden for astronomy studies where the applicant must do an online matching test, to see if the student is aware of what the study contains so that they can select, as well as have a pass for maths 5 and physics as final written exams.

Erasmus Rotterdam School of Management International Business Administration (BA) have a numerus fixus (750 applicants each year) – they select on 75% on high school grades and 25% on motivation. Therefore, the lower the grades the lower the final ranking (fewer the selection points). They require a minimum grade 7 for Maths 5 or minimum grade 8 for maths 3, minimum grade 7 for L1 and L2 and grade point average (GPA) of 80%.

International Sport Management and Business and Amsterdam University of Applied Science HBO (75 places per year) the selection includes: High school diploma (grades not important), strong written and verbal English communication skills, sport medical examination, an online interview (testing your drive and motivation), a promotional video, and online written theory test (English, maths, analytical skills and your knowledge regarding the world of sport management).

### What does this mean for S5 school choices?

Due to the importance of high school profile choice - the important decision is in secondary (S5) when the pupil in ES needs to choose a study profile – or package of subjects at advanced or standard level. The high school profiles that are referred to by admission offices to get into a Dutch university are culture and society (C&M), economy and society (E&M), the profile nature and health (N&G) and the beta profile nature & science/techniek (N&T) with maths, physics, chemistry, biology and IT/technology.

This last package N&T is often a minimum requirement for the science-based subjects at Dutch University programmes with often a numerus fixus (limited places). Therefore, this choice moment at the age of 15 at the ES determines what university course they can get into. Therefore, choice of profile and which exams to do in a written exam versus an oral exam can

determine the early career path of your child and as such this decision is key. This decision at age 15 determines if pupils can get into certain university programs or not – as some require a minimum grade of 7 for 4 specific written exams.

In the EB system pupils create a package of subjects – with compulsory subjects, optional subjects and complementary subject’s minimum of 10 and max of 13 subjects. It is ideal at the age of 15 or 16 when your child needs to make profile choices that they have already done an internships/volunteering to find out what they might like as a career – to find out what interests them and what doesn’t interest them. Perhaps it would be worth visiting some university open days as well, so they don’t have to rush the decision at the last minute – but they have time to think about it. Their choice of career and interest area may determine their choice of profile and subjects (especially the beta subjects).

### Subjects and choice structure

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS				OPTIONS				COMPLEMENTARY SUBJECTS <sup>5</sup>	
Column 1	Column 2			Column 3	Column 4			Column 5	
Language 1	4 p.	Biology <sup>1</sup>	2 p.	Ancient Greek	4 p.	Advanced L1	3 p.	Biology Lab <sup>6</sup>	2 p.
Language 2	3 p.	Geography <sup>2</sup>	2 p.	Latin	4 p.	Advanced L2	3 p.	Chemistry Lab <sup>6</sup>	2 p.
Maths 3 or	3 p.	History <sup>2</sup>	2 p.	Biology	4 p.	Advanced Maths <sup>4</sup>	3 p.	Physics Lab <sup>6</sup>	2 p.
Maths 5	5 p.	Philosophy <sup>2</sup>	2 p.	Chemistry	4 p.			ICT	2 p.
Religion or Ethics	1 p.			Physics	4 p.			Sociology	2 p.
Physical Education	2 p.			Geography	4 p.			Art <sup>7</sup>	2 p.
				History	4 p.			Music <sup>7</sup>	2 p.
				Economics	4 p.			Language 5 <sup>7</sup>	2 p.
				Philosophy	4 p.				
				ONL <sup>3</sup>	4 p.			...	2 p.
				Language 3	4 p.				
				Language 4	4 p.				
				Art	4 p.				
				Music	4 p.				
	<sup>1</sup> Biology 2p. is compulsory unless Physics or Chemistry or Biology is chosen in column 3. <sup>2</sup> All courses in column 2 must be taken if not chosen in column 3.			<sup>3</sup> If ONL is chosen, L4 cannot be chosen.		<sup>4</sup> Advanced Maths can only be chosen together with Maths 5 periods in column 1.		<sup>5</sup> The catalogue of complementary courses varies from one school to another. <sup>6</sup> Laboratory subjects should only be taken if the corresponding 4-period subject has been chosen. <sup>7</sup> Art 2 p. and Music 2 p. not allowed if taken in column 3.	

The way parents can also help their child would be to make them aware of their choices and consequences – i.e. if you are interested in designing a building you need to take maths 5 for 6 periods for example, if you want to own your own business – maths, economics, philosophy and IT might make sensible choices or if you like the idea of being in medicine then biology 5 periods is necessary plus the 6<sup>th</sup> written exam in chemistry or physics etc.

Important to note pupils cannot take a subject in s6 if their results show that they have not been following it satisfactorily in s4 and S5. If a pupil wants to choose a subject which they have not studied in S4 or S5, they will be assessed before the start of S6 to make sure they have the right aptitudes to allow them to progress successfully. Starting a new subject in S7 is strictly forbidden in the European School system.

The preliminary mark is given on your final school day before the European Baccalaureate examinations in S7. It is the average mark of all your subjects (except Ethics/Religion) and comes from your class marks (A1 and A2 marks) and the marks achieved in your short and long Pre-Baccalaureate examinations (B1 and B2 marks). Please, note that the long PreBaccalaureate examinations usually take place in January, two weeks after the winter holidays. The overall preliminary marks weight is 40% for the A mark and 60% for the B mark. The preliminary mark accounts for 50% of the final mark of the European Baccalaureate, so it is very important to make a constant effort throughout the year. A good preliminary mark will allow you to start your European Baccalaureate examinations with less stress, so aim at the highest preliminary mark possible.

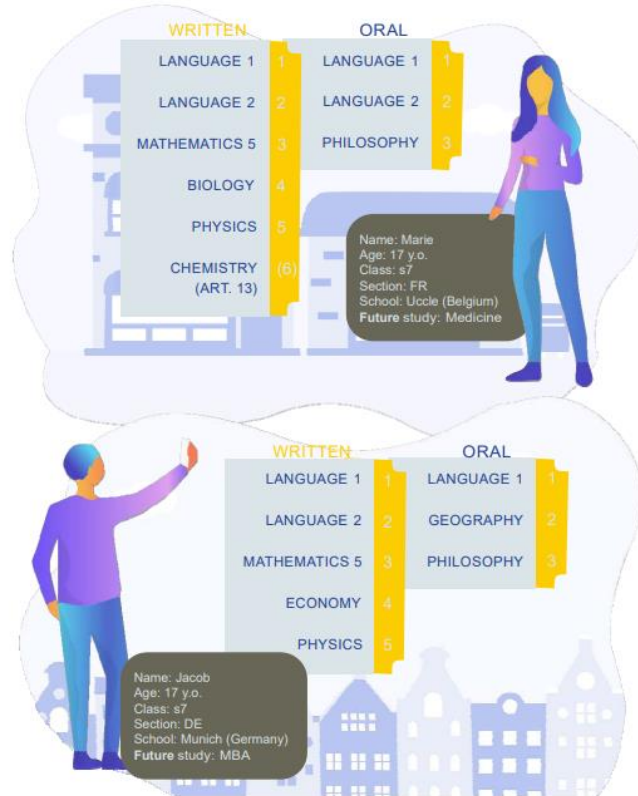
These websites will help your kid make good choices:

[Van Profiel naar Studie - Studiekeuze123](#)

[Bac Mark \(esbacmark.github.io\)](#)



## EXAMPLES



### ESB Information sessions for parents and pupils

Parents should be aware of the career's advice from school to enable conversations at the right moments during the year with your child. The following is provided at school:

- A session for S5, S6 and S7 on networking and careers paths
- A session for S6 parents to explain the process of applying to universities in the Netherlands, the UK, France and where to start if your child wishes to go to another EU member state.
- An S6 pupil careers morning involving ideas about choices and what to do next. This involves ex-pupils revisiting the school to present and answer questions on their experiences since leaving ESB (also for S5 pupils).
- The S6 students will then have a similar presentation to parents on applying to university. This followed by a research activity on universities to find information on courses, locations, costs, accommodation, social life and many other things they will not have thought about

At [ES Bergen](#) there are careers advisers in all 3 sections, and they use a variety of resources to make students think about possible careers. In S3 there is a short programme leading to S4 options (with a parental options meeting, this is usually in January). In S5 in semester 1 there is an extended careers programme where students do a variety of activities to help them make choices and to help them identify careers that may be of interest (for example a careers questionnaire). In semester 2 of S5 the pupils set up a work experience programme which runs for 2 weeks in June.

### [Visit University Open Days](#)

Visiting Universities during their physical open days is very much advised – as not only does your child get a feel for the University, but they might also be able to speak with existing students and take a trial lesson, visit the classrooms, speak with teachers and discuss high school diploma details with the admissions department. Heads up for parents of kids in S5,6,7 - Dutch universities have their open days (physically or online) from November to March each year. However, the December open day for those courses with a numerus fixus (limited places and selection) and application deadline January 15<sup>th</sup> is often the last one before the deadline for application closes. By googling “Open dagen + studiekeuze” you will find numerous links to lists of open days in Holland (this is a useful website in Dutch [Open dagen kalender - Studiekeuze123](#)).

## Useful Links:

Curriculums for each subject at ESB: [Syllabuses 2023 \(eursc.eu\)](#)

ES BAC handbook [BAC Handbook-en.pdf \(eursc.eu\)](#)

Open days in Netherlands [Open dagen kalender - Studiekeuze123](#)).

Nuffic European Bacalaureate [Education system European Baccalaureate | Nuffic](#)

Numerus fixus studies 2024 [Overzicht numerus fixusopleidingen 2024-2025 \(studiekeuze123.nl\)](#)

ESB top 10 tips for studying [Microsoft Word - Ten tips for effective study.doc \(esbergen.eu\)](#)

Studylink [Studielink - How to apply to Dutch universities \(studyinholland.co.uk\)](#)