Credit Transfer for Open/Online Graduate Programs: Annex 6 Netherlands

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3.6 Netherlands

The population of the Netherlands is 17 million, about half that of Canada. However, the Netherlands has no equivalent to the Canadian structure of provinces – the whole country acts as one entity in education terms, and in all other matters.

University sector

This material comes from several sources including the standard Nuffic document.[1]

The Netherlands has a strict binary divide in its public higher education sector: universities (research universities, *universiteiten*) and universities of applied sciences (UAS, *hogescholen*). In addition the lengths of degree programmes vary more than in UK (3 or 4 years depending on subject) and advanced entry (direct to year 2) is possible for students with appropriately high grades in school-leaving qualifications. This affects many issues including the amount of credit offered towards further qualifications.

(In this context it should be noted that despite its apparent egalitarian approach the Dutch secondary school system has a 3-track system of schools, though with some scope for pupils to change tracks at certain points.)

[1] https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-the-netherlands.pdf – surprisingly this is the latest version

The Netherlands also has a number of private universities, of which the best known is Nyenrode Business School. Some like Nyenrode are "approved" (*aangewezen*) – they receive no government funding but may award officially recognised bachelor's and master's degrees. Others are fully private (*particuliere*), like campuses of foreign universities, but there are others.

Fees

Standard tuition fees in 2016/17 are EUR 1,984 (C$2920)[2] for most courses, at both undergraduate and master's level. However, there are needs-based grants and merit-based grants: around 75% of students at both levels get such grants. There are also loans.

International students pay higher fees, determined locally by each institution.

Private universities almost always charge much higher fees.

The Dutch qualifications system

The Netherlands, like all EU Member States (in theory at least) uses the ECTS system. The following material is summarised from Wikipedia[3] and other sources.

- A university bachelor's programme requires the completion of 180 credits (3 years).
  A UAS bachelor's programme requires the completion of 240 credits (4 years).
- Master's programmes at the University level mostly require the completion of 60 or 120 credits (1 or 2 years).
  Some programmes require 90 (1.5 years) or more than 120 credits.
  In engineering, agriculture, mathematics, and the natural sciences, 120 credits are always required.
  In (veterinary) medicine or pharmacy the master's phase requires 180 credits (3 years).
  Other studies that usually have 60-credit "theoretical master's programmes" sometimes offer 120-credit technical or research masters.
- Master's programmes from UAS require the completion of 60 to 120 credits.

Language of study

There are well over 1500 English-language study programmes offered at Dutch universities[4] – the University of Amsterdam has many. Indeed, Maastricht University does almost all of its teaching in English and it is said that several other Dutch universities are considering following their example.

Online learning

In general terms the Netherlands is seen as an advanced user of e-learning at HE level. However, with the obvious exception of the Dutch OU this is used mainly as on-campus blended learning. Many universities run Blackboard.

Most Dutch universities are rather conservative. Earlier successes in online distance learning such as the University of Twente seem to have faded, at least relative to the EU state of the

[2] Conversion is €1 = C$1.47 on 20 September 2017

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Netherlands

[4] https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/international/europe/netherlands/

art. However, there are around 130 online courses now offered (apart from at OUNL), including from Delft as well as Twente and indeed from a few of the hogeschoolen (such as Fontys).

The Universities of Applied Sciences – like Fontys – are less conservative and more innovative in teaching methods (especially practice-based) but most have not yet built up much impetus in online learning. They have a very strong regional focus and little interest in recruiting students from beyond their region; thus few are interested in MOOCs either.

MOOC activity is quite widespread, with Coursera having 4 members, FutureLearn 3, iversity 1 and the Open Education Consortium 4.

Despite most Dutch speaking English and the large number of foreign students studying courses in English, there is a substantial lack of relevant documentation in English.

3.6.1 Open Universiteit

Wikipedia reports that:[5]

> The Open University of the Netherlands was founded in 1984 and opened to students that September. The administration is based in Heerlen, in the province of Limburg, in the very south of the Netherlands. The university has twelve study centres and three support centres dispersed throughout the continental Netherlands, as well as six study centres in Dutch-speaking Flanders (Belgium) and partnerships with institutions in Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and Suriname.
>
> Since the Open University was founded, more than 250,000 students have enrolled in courses. As of September 2016, approximately 15,000 students were enrolled at study or support centres in the Netherlands, including some residents of other countries.
>
> The Open University consists of three faculties: School of Cultural Studies and Law; School of Management, Science and Technology; and School of Psychology and Education.
>
> The Open University offers courses of study at the bachelor's and master's degree levels in the following disciplines: cultural studies, education science, law, management, psychology, science and technology. The university collaborates with Flemish universities to enable Belgian students to attend classes. Five of its master's degree programmes were top-ranked in 2017.

OUNL offers 597 programmes[6] of which 14 are at Master's level – they are listed in the table below.

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_University_of_the_Netherlands

[6] https://www.ou.nl/web/open-universiteit/opleiding-overzicht?

ECTS and code	*Short title*	*Description*
60 EC | MABPM	Master Business Process Management and IT (MSc)	This course is suitable for IT analysts, business analysts, process owners and consultants who want to grow into a broader and more responsible position at university level. You look after ...
120 EC | MACS	Master Computer Science (MSc)	This broad education based on the pillars of software engineering and information systems, following the Bachelor of Computing and offers the possibility of deepening and specialization. So you can ...
60 EC | MAES	Master Environmental Sciences (MSc)	Are you interested in environmental and sustainability issues and the search for effective solutions, this master is you like a glove. We train you to be an academically trained ...
60 EC | MAKC	Master of Arts and Cultural Studies	If you already have a bachelor's degree in Cultural Studies, or have completed a bachelor's degree in Philosophy, Cultural History, Art History, Literature or a combination here ...
60 EC | MOM	Master Management (MSc)	Time for the next step in your management career? After attending this course you can make a full contribution to the functioning of organizations, due to problems in the area of management ...
60 EC | MAOW	Master of Education Sciences	Modern society needs effective, engaging and effective learning environments in schools, the workplace, at home and on the road. You wear an expert in education sciences ...
60 EC | MAPAO	Master Psychology – variant Labour Organisations	This scientific program provides an extensive content on floor you previously acquired knowledge and skills from the bachelor program in the field of research, diagnosis and intervention ...
60 EC | MAPGZ	Master Psychology – Health Psychology variant	This scientific program provides an extensive content on floor you previously acquired knowledge and skills from the bachelor program in the field of research, diagnosis and intervention ...
60 EC | MAPKP	Master Psychology – variant Clinical Psychology	This scientific program provides an extensive content on floor you previously acquired knowledge and skills from the bachelor program in the field of research, diagnosis and intervention ...
60 EC | MAPLL	Master Psychology – variant Lifespan Psychology	This scientific program provides an extensive content on floor you previously acquired knowledge and skills from the bachelor program in the field of research, diagnosis and intervention ...
60 EC | MAR	Master of Law	Besides your theoretical knowledge you will develop your legal skills. You learn to think beyond the boundaries of the law and national law. So you will soon permanently ...
60 EC | MASE	Master Software Engineering (MSc)	The training consists of courses with a fixed or variable start time. Look before you create a study plan in the Rooster Year Master Software Engineering as a course starts and ...

ECTS and code	*Short title*	*Description*
60 EC | VMRM	Free Master of Law: Law with Management	The variant with Right Management to Master's courses are required, covering the multidisciplinary context of the law, and the Master's courses in the field of management sciences. Furthermore ...
60 EC | VUPI	Free Master of Law: Law of psychology	In the variant law of psychology that master courses required, covering the multidisciplinary context of the law, and the Master's courses in the field of psychology. Furthermore, ...

Only one, on Computer Science, is 120 ECTS (two academic years' worth), the others are all 60 ECTS (one academic year's worth).

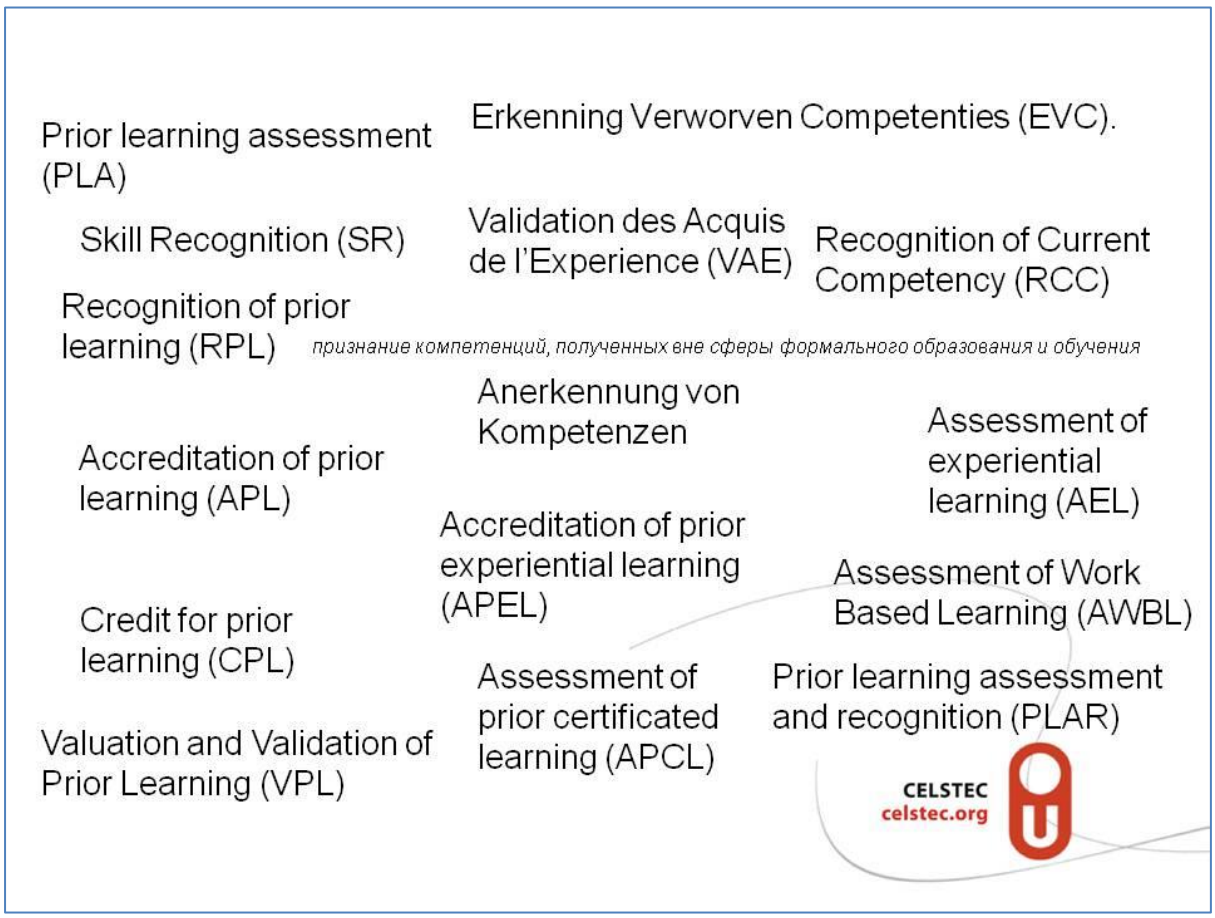
Entry, credit transfer and PLAR

Not surprisingly for a site mainly in Dutch, there are few references to Accreditation of Prior Learning on the web site, and none recently, except for references in research papers. However an old report is interesting: *We've got to be open: OPEN UNIVERSITEIT NEDERLAND IN 2007–2008*:[7]

> **Assessment of prior learning**
> The Open University is the first university in the Netherlands to formally acknowledge students' prior learning and achievement. Students are awarded exemptions and admitted to all the university's Bachelor programmes **and the Active Learning Master's programme** based, for example, on their work experience. **Assessment of prior learning (APL) will be extended to other Master's programmes later**. The Open University is also an official APL provider: the Hobéon certification agency has given the university's new APL procedure favourable marks on all counts, (page 4)
>
> **Ahead of the rest in APL**
> The Open University is the first university in the Netherlands to have taken Accreditation of Prior Learning – APL – on board, a decision that is no more than logical. APL emphasises the skills that people have, not the ones they lack. That inspires them to go back to school and to continue to work on their personal development, an attitude entirely in keeping with the Netherlands' main university for lifelong learning. Students can now also be awarded exemptions and be admitted to programmes, based, for example, on their work experience. Wherever possible, the Open University shares the expertise that its Centre for Learning Sciences and Technologies has acquired in assessing and accrediting prior learning. One example is the APL Centre that it helped set up in the Province of Zeeland with Zeeland University, the Westerschelde and Zeeland Regional Education Centres, and Edudelta College. Another is the APL Box, a digital tool that organises and screens prior learning for variation and quality. The latter is the result of a partnership between the Open University and Fontys University of Applied Sciences. (page 18)

[7] https://www.ou.nl/Docs/English/Jaarbeeld_2007-2008_ENG_DEF.PDF

There are some other references in Dutch to APL (called EVC in Dutch) including a useful multilingual glossary in a presentation circa 2008, [8] shown below:



MSc Computer Science

This programme is described as follows:[9]

> This broad education based on the pillars of software engineering and information systems, follows the Bachelor of Computing and offers the possibility of deepening and specialization. So a student develops into an academic engineer who can tackle new and existing challenges: an expert who uses scientific methods and techniques. Students get started with the process to find, compare, assess and apply scientific knowledge in computer science on the basis of current problems. Students will also learn to develop systems using the latest techniques and insights.
>
> The program is spread over four academic years: each year is divided into two semesters and a summer break. Courses are programmed within this structure so that students can advance a realistic study plan. Deceleration and acceleration is possible in consultation with your academic advisor. In total a student studies 15

[8] http://www.ou.nl/Docs/Campagnes/EVC-congres/Joosten-ten%20Brinke_EVCcongres%20onderzoek.ppt

[9] English automatically translated then manually edited from the Dutch text at https://www.ou.nl/web/open-universiteit/-/MACS_Master-Computer-Science-MSc?redirecter=/web/open-universiteit/opleiding-overzicht

courses totalling 120 credits (ECTS). This is similar to a two-year full-time training programme.

The list of modules is:

Code	*Title*	*ECTS*
IM0001	Academic Writing	2.5
IM0104	Business Processes	10
IM0002	Business Intelligence	5
IM0102	Design Patterns	5
IM0003	Enterprise Architecture	7.5
IM0103	Rule Based Design for Computer Science	7.5
IM0101	Research Preparation	2.5
IM0203	Software Architecture	7.5
IM0202	Software Evolution	5
IM0303	Software Life Cycle	7.5
IM0302	Software Security	5
IM0402	System Verification and Testing	5
IM0204	IT Governance	10
IM0004	Preparing graduation Computer Science	10
IM990C	Graduation Computer Science	30

In the last module a thesis of 30 ECTS (60 CATS, the sector standard in the UK) students must show that they meet the goals of the MSc Computer Science: Building a working information or working application, research into newer and better communication applications and systems.

A contrast: Master of Arts and Cultural Studies

This is 60-ECTS programme with a 20-ECTS thesis.

The initial introduction to this programme does not suggest any great flexibility in entry:[10]

> If you already have a bachelor's degree in Cultural Studies, or have completed a bachelor's degree in Philosophy, Cultural History, Art History, Literature or a combination? Then, this master is an excellent follow-up....

The documentation then goes into more detail:

> The Master of Art and Cultural Studies is intended for:
>
> - Students with a Bachelor in Cultural Studies,
> - Students with a related academic bachelor's or master,

[10] https://www.ou.nl/web/open-universiteit/-/MAKC_Master-Kunst--en-cultuurwetenschappen?redirecter=/web/open-universiteit/opleiding-overzicht

- HBO students with related training.

The reference to HBO needs explanation. Wikipedia notes that:[11]

> The HBO (*Hoger beroepsonderwijs*; literally, "higher professional education") is oriented towards higher learning and professional training. After HBO (typically 4–6 years), pupils can enrol in a (professional) master's program (1–2 years) or enter the job market.... The HBO is taught in vocational universities (hogescholen), of which there are over 60 in the Netherlands, each of which offers a broad variety of programs, with the exception of some that specialize in arts or agriculture. Note that the hogescholen are not allowed to name themselves university in Dutch. This also stretches to English and therefore HBO institutions are known as *universities of applied sciences*.

The master courses extend across two quartiles (= one half). Students can follow two courses per semester parallel. In the second half of the training they study one small (er) course. Then they start the thesis research and writing the Master's thesis. The graduation process begins with writing a thorough research plan.

The table of modules is given below. Note that students have a choice of modules except for the thesis-related ones at the end.

Code	*Title*	*ECTS*
CM0003	Plenty of entertainment! Leisure and urban culture 1870-2010	7.5
CM0103	State and nation building in Europe since the lights	7.5
CM0203	The nineteenth-century novel	7.5
CM0303	The age of the readers	7.5
CM0403	Art and Identity in the interwar	7.5
CM0503	Art History Organize	7.5
CM0603	Contemporary cultural analysis and cultural criticism	7.5
CM0703	Darwin's philosophical legacy	7.5
CM0803	The colonial experience from literary and cultural-historical perspective	7.5
CM0002	The lighting is multifaceted phenomenon	5
CM0302	Masterclass	5
CM0402	Reinventing Knowledge interdisciplinary seminar on the history of knowledge and knowledge transfer	5
CM0202	Reading List and research plan 1	5
CM020Z	Reading List and research plan 2	3.9
CM020Y	Reading list and research plan 3	2.8
CM020X	Reading List and research plan 4	1.7
CM9908	Master's Thesis	20

[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Netherlands#HBO

3.6.2 Maastricht University

Since the documentation on the OUNL web site is mostly in Dutch, we decided to look at the web site of Maastricht University.[12] This teaches many courses in English – moreover, it has a long history of collaboration with OUNL (they are based in adjacent towns) and indeed provides physical and electronic library access to OUNL staff and students. The web site notes:[13]

> Maastricht University (UM) is the most international university in the Netherlands and, with more than 16,000 students and 4,000 employees, is still growing. The university stands out for its innovative education model, international character and multidisciplinary approach to research and education.

It is the youngest and most international university in the Netherlands, with 16,500 students, 4,000 staff and 55,000 alumni.

Maastricht has 55 master's programmes in English and just 13 in Dutch. Most are full-time with just two part-time (two MBA programmes). The full list is on the next page – it would be twice as long if we put in all the specialisations.[14]

[12] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl

[13] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um

[14] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/master

Advanced Master in Intellectual Property Law and Knowledge Management (LLM/MSc)	Affective Neuroscience	Art, Literature and Society
Artificial Intelligence	Arts and Heritage: Policy, Management and Education	Biobased Materials
Biomedical Sciences	Business Intelligence and Smart Services	Business Research
Cultures of Arts, Science and Technology (Research)	Data Science for Decision Making	Econometrics and Operations Research
Economic and Financial Research	Economics	Epidemiology
Euro MBA	European Law School	European Public Affairs
European Studies	European Studies (Research)	European Studies on Society, Science and Technology
Executive Master of Enterprise IT Architecture (MEITA)	Executive Master of IT Governance and Assurance	Financial Economics
Fiscal Economics	Forensic Psychology	Forensics, Criminology and Law
Global Health	Global Supply Chain Management and Change	Globalisation and Development Studies
Globalisation and Law	Governance and Leadership in European Public Health	Health Education and Promotion
Health Food Innovation Management	Health Professions Education	Healthcare Policy, Innovation and Management
Human Decision Science	Human Movement Sciences	Information and Network Economics
International and European Tax Law	International Business	International Executive Master of Auditing
international Executive Master of Finance and Control	International Laws	Management of Learning
Media Culture	Politics and Society	Psychology
Public Policy and Human Development	Research Master in Cognitive and Clinical Neuroscience	Research Master in Health Sciences
Sustainability Science and Policy	Systems Biology	The Maastricht MBA
Work, Health and Career		

Enrolment for Master's

Maastricht has a comprehensive set of regulations for students enrolling for all programmes including master's.[15] However the web page states a key restriction:

> Please note: *Legally*, [our italics] you can only start a master's programme once you have successfully completed your bachelor's programme.

[15] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/support/your-studies-begin/admission-registration/applying-masters-programme

This does not bode well for PLAR. In addition there are additional requirements for students whose first degree is from a university of applied sciences. In particular:

> Article 7 Throughflow from higher vocational education to a university master's programme (bridging programme)
>
> 1. The OER [enrolment regulations] for a number of UM master's programmes set down how students who have completed a bachelor's programme at an institute for higher vocational education can continue on to a related master's at UM **by following a bridging programme**.
> 2. Participants in the bridging programme are enrolled as non-degree seeking students, which means they are ineligible for study financing on the basis of the WSF 2000.
> 3. Depending on the number of credits (ECTS) of the relevant bridging programme, pursuant to the WHW the following fees are charged:
>   a. 30 ECTS programme: €992.50 (C$1461)
>   b. 60 ECTS programme: €2,976.00 (C$4381)
>   c. tailored programme up to 30 ECTS: €33.07 per ECTS
>   d. tailored programme for the part above 30 ECTS: €66.14 per ECTS.

In a nutshell, graduates from an HBO may have to take an additional 60 ECTS (equivalent to one year of full-time study) to even **begin** a master's programme at Maastricht University!

Even more intriguingly the bridging programme is delivered by the Open University in the Netherlands and still offers no guarantee of entry. As one example:[16]

> *Bridging Programme: Sustainability Science and Policy (SSP)*
>
> If you do not meet the requirements for the master's programme Sustainability Science and Policy (SSP), then the so-called Bridging Programme might be a solution for you. The Bridging Programme consists of a collection of tailor-made courses that offer you the chance to tackle a deficiency in knowledge of sustainable development and/or a deficiency in research methods.
>
> The Bridging Programme is in English. **You can study the courses, and take the exam at home.** It is possible to complete the bridging program within 10 weeks.
>
> **The Bridging Programme is not a guarantee that you will be admitted to the Master programme**, but it increases your changes significantly – if you also fulfil all other requirements.

It gets worse. For a suitable "lesser" master's, the bridging programme can be avoided. The wording given was written in English, it is not our translation:[17]

> The master's programme in Work, Health and Career (WHC) can be followed either full-time (1 year) or part-time (2 years).

[16] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/bridging-programme-sustainability-science-and-policy-ssp

[17] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/master-work-health-and-career-0/why-this-programme

> The part-time programme presents an excellent opportunity for working professionals. You are required to attend university one day per week, either Tuesday or Friday, which allows you to combine study and work. Moreover, you will be able to carry out your final master's research project at your own workplace.
>
> ***Even* people with a relevant bachelor's degree from a University of Applied Sciences (hbo) are admissible, after completing an entrance test. It is unique that you can get an academic master's degree within two years, without having to do a bridging programme first.**

There could be no clearer exemplar of the two-tier structure of higher education in the Netherlands.

3.6.3 Fontys University of Applied Sciences

As a contrast we look at a university of applied sciences (HBO) where, by analogy with other countries, one would expect enrolment to be more flexible.

Fontys offers 32 programmes[18] with a range of 9 master's programmes in English and German:

- Architecture (Master)
- Choreography (Master)
- Master Care & Technology
- Master of Business Administration (English)
- Master of Music
- Master of Science in Business and Management
- Master of Science in International Logistics, SCM and Procurement
- Performing Public Space (Master)
- Urbanism (Master)

However, with the exception of the "creative" master's such as Music and Choreography, entry requirements have a traditional focus on degrees and there are no matches for "APL" and similar phrases. Yet on the Dutch-language site fontys.nl there are several references to "EVC" and links to pages on procedures.

Master of Arts, Performing Public Space

The brand new international Master programme Performing Public Space (PPS) is a Distance Learning program (including a three-times two-week on-site Bootcamp), designed for creatives from a variety of art disciplines, who currently focus on public space as their artistic environment. The programme is 1 year full-time, 60 ECTS.[19]

Master of Science in International Logistics, SCM and Procurement

The aim is to prepare students for a management career whether or not they have academic and/or industry experience. It offers students an opportunity to enhance their professional competence with the knowledge, technical capacity and skills demanded in

[18] https://fontys.edu/Bachelors-masters/Bachelor-and-master-programmes.htm

[19] https://fontys.edu/Bachelors-masters/Masters/Master-Performing-Public-Space/Program-Format.htm

senior management positions dealing with logistics, procurement and supply chain management issues.

Students should be motivated to work hard since the programme has a heavy workload of 90 ECs in1 year.[20]

The programme has the following structure:

Term 1: September – December in The Netherlands;

- Supply Chains and Production Control Systems
- Research Skills and economics for International Supply Chains
- Maritime Finance and Business Modelling

Term 2: January – May in Plymouth, U.K.

- Logistics, Supply Chains, Systems and Methods
- International Supply Chain Systems
- International Logistics Management
- International Procurement Management

Term 3: May – September location can be everywhere

- Research project

Entry

A relevant Bachelor degree or equivalent in a business, engineering or logistics subject. Candidates with a non logistics related bachelor degree will be recommended to prepare by reading a specific book.

However, there is nothing useful on credit transfer.

[20] https://fontys.edu/web/Factsheet?filename=Master_of_Science_in_International_Logistics_SCM_and_Procurement_15-05-2017.pdf&url=%2FBachelors-masters%2FMasters%2FMaster-of-Science-in-International-Logistics-Procurement-SCM%2Ffactsheet-1.htm%3Fpdf%3Dtrue