



Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

Talent-oriented education at Leiden University

Leiden University is a European research-intensive university where teaching and research are closely interwoven. Our lecturers teach students in a challenging, internationally oriented study environment. The education is specialized in order to take into account the different abilities and talents of the students. Study success and developing talent are the core objectives of Leiden University's education policy.

Leiden's excellence policy was established specifically for ambitious students who can and want to do more. The excellence program consists of three elements: the Pre-University College, an Honours College and a University College.

Talent, excellence and leadership

Leiden University is an internationally-oriented research-intensive university. In the profile of the excellent student that the University has in mind, 'excellence' therefore means 'the ability to think and act in an interdisciplinary, problem-solving way at a high level in an international context'.

Leiden's excellence education focuses on enabling students to develop this ability and on preparing them for future leadership in the scientific world or elsewhere in society.

Students who are suitable for Leiden's excellence education are internationally oriented; they demonstrate focused motivation and have the ability to gain more from their study; they proceed through their regular program at a nominal speed and have time left over for extra activities; they attain results in their studies that match their ambition.

Demand-oriented excellence education

The educational concept of Leiden University's excellence education is linked to the profile of the excellent Leiden student. The concept is based on:

- Small-scale teaching and intensive contact between student and lecturer, as well as between students themselves;
- Good opportunities for self-direction and demand-led teaching;
- Students using their own initiative in planning the teaching, research or other activities that promote their general development;
- International orientation in the education and other student activities;
- Individual supervision and coaching from a tutor (University College) or a talent coach (Honours College) who guarantees the level and focus of the track taken by each individual student, and inspires and urges the students to achieve the maximum from their studies and to develop an independent attitude towards studying;



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- Selection: before University admission for the University College and after University admission for the Honours College.

Pre-University College

The Pre-University College, which came into existence in 2003, offers a two-year program in which talented and motivated pre-university pupils can become acquainted with academic learning and with the University. The program spans the last two years of the pupils' secondary school education. Almost two hundred school pupils follow the program every year.

Honours College

The Honours College, a University-wide excellence program for all students studying for a Bachelor's degree at Leiden University, started on September 1, 2009. In the Honours College, students studying for a Bachelor's degree will carry out a minimum of 30 EC of extra study activities alongside their regular Bachelor's degree program. All faculties have developed Honours tracks that provide the opportunity for both breadth and depth in teaching and research. The existing interdisciplinary honours classes form part of this program. Each Honours College student chooses at least one honours class per year (5 EC) from the twelve honours classes on offer. Students can make individual choices, within the tracks developed, in close consultation with the talent coach. The talent coach will ensure that there is sufficient correlation between the extra activities selected.

Leiden University College The Hague

From September 1, 2010, an English-language interdisciplinary Bachelor's degree program will commence that is in line with the concept of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The central theme in the Leiden University College The Hague (LUCTH) is Global Challenges, which is divided into Peace and Justice, and Sustainability. Students follow a compulsory program that introduces them to both themes and teaches them academic skills. Global Citizenship is developed through special courses, including language, world literature and art. There is specialization in the eight interdisciplinary majors and the optional minors. The program provides many opportunities for students to follow their own interests. A tutor helps students make appropriate choices. All students conclude their Bachelor's degree with a Bachelor's thesis.

Academic community

The Pre-University College, Honours College and University College programs provide education based on one prime objective: the optimal development of individual talent in an academic community of students and lecturers.

The link between the three excellence programs at Leiden is shown in the joint recruitment and selection principles, the joint training of lecturers, tutors and talent coaches, the interchangeable program components, the joint development of education, and the creation of a community in which lectures, debates and master classes are organized.

The Sirius Program: Excellence in Higher Education

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) has created the Sirius Program to allow higher education institutions to experiment with a range of excellence programs between 2008 and 2013, involving their most talented and motivated students. By allowing research universities and universities of applied sciences to challenge their best students, the Ministry aims to gain an understanding of how excellence can best be achieved, and of the obstacles that currently exist. The largest portion of the budget has been earmarked for the Bachelor's program that was launched in 2008 (€ 48.8 million), for which 16 applications have been approved. Excellence is being promoted across the entire breadth of these university institutions, involving at least 5% of all students in each case. There is a lot of diversity, both in the chosen definitions of 'excellence' and 'excellent students' and in the activities being developed. Work is carried out based on performance agreements (high trust). Sirius organizes a learning program in which institutions learn from themselves and each other, and in which knowledge is also made available to the entire sector and the government. The Master's program, with a budget of € 12.2 million, will start in 2010.

