



sirius program

excellence in higher education



Universiteit Utrecht



Honors education at Utrecht University

Utrecht University is a leading international research university and is active in many research areas. In almost all disciplines, it offers a broad range of academic programs. This variety enables students to pursue their individual interests and ambitions in the best possible way.

As a large and multifaceted international knowledge centre of academic and scientific excellence, Utrecht University's core mission is to:

- Educate young people;
- Train new generations of researchers;
- Produce academics who have both specialist knowledge and professional skills;
- Conduct groundbreaking research;
- Address social issues and work towards solving them.

Innovative

The University offers an innovative teaching and learning environment. Successful teaching concepts, such as selective undergraduate programs, honors programs and the flourishing and challenging academic communities are aimed at developing and encouraging the students' diverse talents.

International

Utrecht University has many exchange programs for students, staff and scientists. Furthermore, it offers many English-taught programs which provide teaching by top teachers and researchers from the Netherlands and abroad. This results in an inspiring international learning environment.

Excellent

All programs meet strict quality requirements and offer stimulating teaching and guidance. Utrecht University expects its students to be committed and active, and to have the ambition to perform to the best of their abilities. With students from 125 countries, 150 student organizations, excellent facilities and a vibrant city, Utrecht University offers its students a fulfilling student life. Commitment, inspiration and ambition are Utrecht University's core values. The University fosters its academic community through investment in staff and students.

Key figures

Seven faculties: Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance, Faculty of Geosciences, Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Medicine / University Medical Center Utrecht, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

Number of students: 29,306; 6,597 of whom are new students, with 5,889 being undergraduate students.

Number of programs: 45 undergraduate programs and 123 accredited graduate programs comprising 195 Master's and 22 teacher-training programs.



platform
Delta Techniek

Lange Voorhout 20 T +31 (0)70 311 97 11
Postbus 556 F +31 (0)70 311 97 10
2501 CN Den Haag (NL) info@siriusprogramma.nl

For more information: www.siriusprogramma.nl

Number of diplomas: 8,090; 3,762 of which are undergraduate diplomas.

Teaching program success rate: 57%

Strategy towards excellence in higher education at Utrecht University

Utrecht University sees excellence as a product of an excellent learning context and the individual talents and motivation of the student. The learning context facilitates and stimulates bright students to excel. Utrecht University wants to encourage the development of exceptional talent to ensure that the best students reach the highest levels.

Our history of honors programs

Approximately fifteen years ago, Utrecht University was one of the first universities in the Netherlands to start honors education in the form of the Social Geography and Planning Bachelor's program. Soon after, our Faculty of Veterinary Medicine followed with its own honors program. In 1997, University College Utrecht (UCU) was launched, as the first selective, international honors college in the Netherlands in the spirit of liberal arts and sciences. Students from the Netherlands as well as from abroad can follow a broad three-year English-taught undergraduate program based on the Anglo-Saxon model. This honors college provides talented international students with challenging, small-scale and English-taught academic programs. UCU's graduation success rate is very high. UCU graduates continue to complete Master's and PhD programs at a variety of prestigious institutes in the Netherlands and elsewhere. In 2004, we started a second honors college in Middelburg, called the Roosevelt Academy. Both colleges were recently rated as 'excellent' by an international assessment committee regarding the teaching level and success rates. Presently, each college plays host to 600 students from over fifty different countries.

Our current honors programs

The number of initiatives related to honors programs rose quickly in 2008, partly because of the grant we received from the Dutch government to contribute to the expansion of challenging programs for excellent students. The grant will be spread over fifteen different projects reflecting the versatility of Utrecht University's teaching programs.

Each project is seen as a pilot to acquire knowledge about and experience with excellence tracks. This knowledge and experience will be shared with internal and external partners. Despite the broad range of projects, they all have a number of basic common principles such as a supply chain approach, undergraduate research, interdisciplinary collaboration, community building and evidence-based research. In addition to our University honors programs (University College Utrecht and Roosevelt Academy), all faculties now provide their own honors courses as well. The courses are usually organized through accredited single-discipline Bachelor's programs, but interdisciplinary honors programs are available too, such as those offered by the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Despite a number of common elements, such as challenging teaching activities and stringent admission criteria, the programs are all unique in order to offer students the best opportunities to express their individual talents to the very best of their abilities.

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.

