



## University of Groningen case study

### 1. Short outline of the university.

The University of Groningen (*RUG: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen*) provides high-quality teaching and research, is internationally oriented, respects differences in ambition and talent, works actively with businesses, the government and the public, and is one of the top research universities in Europe .

The university, founded in 1614, has always been a research university, committed to the close interweaving of teaching and research. It offers a full range of academic degree programmes at Bachelor's and Master's level within ten faculties: Arts, Behavioural and Social Sciences, Economics, Law, Management & Organization, Mathematics & Natural Sciences, Medical Sciences, Philosophy, Spatial Sciences, Theology and Religious Studies.

English is the language of instruction for over 70 degree programmes. In addition, there is a wide variety of courses in English available for exchange students and a number of short certificate courses. Every year some 1,800 international students from over 95 countries find their way to our university. Nearly half of the 840 PhD students currently conducting research in Groningen are international students.

The University has an excellent record in a wide variety of research disciplines, reflecting society in all its complexity. The RUG is in the top 3 of European research universities in the fields of: Ecology, Material Sciences, Chemistry and Astronomy. Other strong research groups are in: Nanoscience, Physics, Molecular Biology, Microbiology, Medical Sciences, Neurosciences, Sociology, Philosophy, Theology, Archaeology and Arts. The research is innovative, international and interdisciplinary. Every year more than 4,300 research publications go to print and an average of 260 PhD students are awarded their PhD degree.

The RUG aims to strengthen its top position in European and world-wide higher education. The university invests extra funds in researchers at the cutting edge of their field who want to play a role on the international stage. The RUG also enters into specific strategic alliances with institutions whose research programmes and/or degree programmes tie in with the Groningen programmes and have similarly high levels. The RUG also contributes to further development of academic education in Third World countries and other underprivileged areas.

- 607 students go abroad on Socrates and Marco Polo scholarships
- 1222 foreign students
- 60 English-language Master's degree programmes (including 1 non-CROHO programme) and 4 English-language Bachelor's degree programmes

strategic alliances with Uppsala University , Sweden , and the University of Hamburg, Germany.

### 2. Exchange students incoming:

Visiting foreign students RUG 2003 en 2004				
From	2003	Percentage 2003	2004	Percentage 2004
European Union	549	45,1 %	571	46,7%

Other Europe	162	13,3 %	149	12,2%
Asia	337	27,7 %	355	29,1%
North-America	101	8,3 %	62	5,1%
Africa	39	3,2 %	50	4,1%
South-America	25	2,1 %	25	2,0%
Oceania	4	0,3 %	10	0,8%
Total	1217	100,0 %	<b>1222</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: annual report 2004

### 3. Exchange students outgoing

	2002-2003	2003-2004
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ENROLLED STUDENTS</b>	20 434	21635
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF GRADUATED STUDENTS (excluding the doctoral cycle)</b>	2873	3016
<b>- total OUTWARD Socrates Erasmus mobility</b> (i.e. no. of students in the involved academic year towards any European HE institution)	270	317
<b>- total OUTWARD European mobility</b>	380	401
<b>- total OUTWARD mobility (world-wide)</b> (no. of students in the involved academic year towards any HE institution of the world)	676	607
<b>- total OUTWARD mobility within Coimbra Group</b>	74	

### 4. How the university organizes its services.

The university has a special English portal for future international students. This portal gives:

- general information about the city and the university of Groningen
- information about the bachelor and masters programs and about special courses for exchange students
- information about the research possibilities within the university
- all kinds of practical information students need to know if they want to come to Groningen (e.g. visa, housing, language requirements etc.)
- information about the possibilities for scholarships or fellowships
- contact information

Upon arrival students have to register with the Central Student Administration (CSA) who will send them their registration card. This card is their identification within the university and gives the right of access to libraries, internet account, sports facilities and all other facilities open to students.

As soon as the international students are registered they have the same access to all of the IT-services the university provides for students. All students receive a username and password that they can use for access to all the IT services the university offers. This account is available for the student as long as he/she is registered. If the student does not longer register the account is disabled after three months. This is however not a strict rule exceptions are possible. This account gives access to:

- @student.rug.nl e-mail address which they can keep as long as they are registered. Tools are available for migrating E-mail to other accounts when a student leaves the university;
- Nestor, the electronic learning environment where all the course content of the university is available;
- Progress, the IT system for study progress (grades) and registering for courses
- the catalogue of the university library

- the workstations the university provides for students

At a price the university also offers internet access at home for all students. Students can choose what kind of internet access they would like to have. Throughout Groningen there are a few apartment buildings for students that have a broadband (100 Mbp) access to the internet. The use of this internet access is included in the rent for the apartment. Within the university there is wireless access available for student for free in most of the buildings of the university. There is also a small amount of laptops students can use. A lot of information about the use of these services is provided through the university website. Unfortunately not all information about these services is also available in English.

As soon as the student has access to the IT-services the university provides it is possible to enrol in the courses the student would like to take. This is done in Progress. As soon as this is done the student automatically receives access to the course content in Nestor. Nestor is used extensively within the courses not only for course information but also for instance for more interactive parts of the course, for formative testing and working in groups. After completing a course the student's grade is posted in Progress. At this point of time a transcript of records for departing students is available on paper only. If the home university of the departing student needs more information this is usually handled through communication between staff from the universities concerned. This happens for instance about papers the student has written during the stay in Groningen.

All students within the university have one account for access to all of the IT-services. They will however need to log in separately to all the different applications the university offers. In the past the university conducted tests in the area of single log in for all the applications with A-select. A-Select (Authentication Selector) is middleware that offers a uniform user authentication service to applications. Applications that have the need to authenticate a user will redirect him/her to the A-Select server. A-Select doesn't authenticate users itself rather it selects the configured authentication service for a particular user and redirects the user to an authentication service. Authentication services are implemented by authentication service providers which can be, for example, a bank or a local RADIUS server. Although the test results were good the university did not proceed with the use of A-select because there was no financing available.

#### Library

The Proxy Server of the RUG libraries offers safe, authorized access from outside the RUG to databases, bibliographical databases and electronic journals under license – from any computer in the world. Anyone who clicks a web file on our web site for which the RUG has a license will get immediate access if he/she is working within the RUG-IP domain and be asked to log in if they are coming from outside the RUG-IP domain. If the log-in is accepted, the Proxy will guide the rest of the session; if not, an explanation that this service is only available for staff and students of the RUG will appear. Students can log in using the computer account they received when registering at the university.

### **management of teaching quality**

#### **External quality assurance**

In the Netherlands and Flanders, accreditation is a precondition for government funding of a bachelor's or master's degree programme, for the right of awarding recognized diplomas and, in the Netherlands, for granting financial assistance for students. In the light of the internationalization of education and the labor market, accreditation provides for comparable quality assurance of higher education.

NVAO is the organization entrusted by law to accredit all existing bachelor's and master's degree courses and to validate new study programmes at government-funded higher education institutions as well as institutions approved (but not funded) by the Dutch government. Accreditation is necessary each six years because of the funding-demand. The Dutch government chose programme accreditation. All programmes that want to deliver degrees acknowledged by the Dutch government and want study-grants for their

students younger than 30 years of age should be accredited. The use of ICT in education is an explicit subject in the framework the accreditation organization uses when a programme is reviewed.

### **Internal quality assurance**

Within the University of Groningen several forms of internal quality assurance exist:

- course evaluation
- curriculum evaluation
- department and university evaluation

#### Course evaluation

All courses that are given within the university are evaluated on a regular basis, usually once every two years. For these evaluations a standard procedure and a standard tool is developed that is used throughout the university. The use of ICT in education is an important subject in these evaluations. The results of the evaluations are discussed with the faculty involved and they use it to improve their course.

There are specific programs to improve the quality of the courses in the electronic environment of the university. In this program an educational scientist visits a faculty member to discuss his/her education and the course that is made for the electronic learning environment. Based upon the discussion with the faculty the educational scientist proposes improvements to the (educational value of the) online course. In some cases teaching assistants help making a better course.

#### Curriculum evaluation

All curricula of the university are evaluated on a regular basis. This happens at least every six years because it is obligatory in the accreditation process. At this point of time the use of ICT in a curriculum is not a point of very specific attention unless it is requested by a department. The results of the curriculum evaluation are used for long term quality assurance and are often used to make bigger changes to a curriculum.

#### Department and university evaluation

Every three years the so called "100 over de RUG" (100 questions about RUG) survey is carried out. In this survey several thousands of students studying at the university answer 100 questions about the university. All students registered at the university can be asked to participate in the survey, this includes the international students. The survey includes several questions about the student satisfaction about the use of ICT in education. Because of the response it is possible to give valid conclusions on both the university and the department level. In most cases it is also possible to reach valid conclusions on the level of a study program.

## **5. University policy / strategy / actions to support incoming and outgoing exchange students**

Internationalization is an integral part of the university's policy. The RUG has established long-term partnerships with selected universities both within Europe and further afield, and participates in many international networks, such as the Coimbra Group and Asea-Uninet. In addition, the university has strategic cooperation with Uppsala University in Sweden, Fudan University in China, Institut of Teknologi in Bandung (ITB) in Indonesia, and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico. As well, the university strongly values its cooperation with universities in developing countries and in transitional economies.

### **Master's Programmes**

The University of Groningen offers a full range of Master's Programmes lasting between one and two years. The language of instruction is English for nearly 60 Master's programmes. This is the result of the university's focus on internationalization. All programmes are of a high quality and grounded in research. In addition to regular Master's programmes, the university offers 2-year exclusive Master's programmes that have a strong emphasis on research. Successful completion of a Master's programme is awarded

with a Master's degree (MA, MSc or LL.M). With a Master's degree you qualify for admission to a related PhD programme.

### **Graduate Schools (2-year Master's Programmes)**

The university offers 31 exclusive Master's programmes that have a strong focus on research. They are associated with 16 different Graduate schools. These programmes last two years and are especially interesting for students who wish to pursue a career in research. The admission procedure is highly selective. Teaching is provided by our best scientific staff. The 2-year Master's programmes are the perfect introduction to related four-year PhD programmes that are also part of the Graduate Schools.

### **Joint programmes**

Some programmes are offered together with a strategic international partner university, or in a consortium of European universities. Part of the programme can/will be followed abroad. Joint programmes offer a student the additional experience of studying in different countries, learning how to cope with different systems, cultures and societies. Upon successful completion of a joint programme, students receive an additional certificate or in some cases a degree from both universities: a 'double degree'. Precisely how long a student studies abroad varies.

### **Faculty co-ordinators and International Service Desk**

The International Service Desk (ISD) is part of the International Relations Office. The ISD is responsible for all visa applications and, in some cases, work permit applications for (PhD) students and staff. The ISD informs all prospective and registered international students and staff about general matters relating to studying at the University of Groningen or living in the Netherlands, and refers questions to experts from within or outside the university. Subjects vary from visa procedures, registration, medical care, housing, university facilities and travel information to matters concerning everyday life.

- Next to the ISD every department has its own coordinator for incoming and outgoing international students. These coordinators give general support and guidance to the foreign students studying in Groningen and advice to the Groningen students about studying abroad, and general support in preparing such a study period.



