



Statement

Pre-university education in the Netherlands (vwo, 1999-2007)

The Dutch pre-university education (**voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs - vwo**) is covered by the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and is funded entirely by central government. It is governed by the Secondary Education Act (Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs – WVO).

The term vwo encompasses three types of education:

- Gymnasium with Greek and Latin as compulsory subjects,
- Lyceum with Greek and Latin as optional subjects,
- Atheneum without Greek and Latin.

The type of education is not always mentioned on the diploma.

The course has a nominal duration of six years (age 12 to 18), after eight years of primary education (age 4 to 12), and is part of the system of general secondary education.

The aim is to provide pupils with a general secondary education and to prepare them for entrance to university education.

Holders of the vwo diploma are entitled to be admitted directly to the first year of any course in higher professional education and university education (section 7.24 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek – WHW).

Though vwo diploma holders are entitled to admission to universities and colleges of higher professional education, applicants may be required by ministerial order to have passed the final examination in one or two specified subjects in order to be admitted to certain courses.

Persons who do not meet these requirements may be asked by the faculty concerned to sit a preparatory examination in the subject or subjects in question. The board of the chosen institution decides how to fulfil these requirements, during the first year of the study or preceding the study (section 7.25 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act).

Profiles are introduced to improve with reference to further education. A profile consists of a coherent programme preparing pupils for a course in higher education.

There are four profiles:

- Nature and technology
- Nature and health
- Economics and society
- Culture and society

Each profile has a common component, a specific component and a free component. The common component contains in any case the subjects Dutch and English.

The specific component contains in any case the following subjects:

- Nature and technology: mathematics, physics and chemistry,
- Nature and health: mathematics, biology and chemistry,
- Economics and society: mathematics, economics and, optional, geography, social science or history,
- Culture and society: mathematics, cultural and artistic education (ckv2 or ckv3), or history, philosophy or a classic language.

The free component contains two exam subjects, which pupils have to choose, often a second modern language or subjects of another profile.

Next to it a part of the course is completely free. This is for example meant for religion. But pupils may also choose an extra exam subject.

To enable a comparison with the marking system in another country, here is an explanation of the marks 1 to 10 in the Dutch system:

10 - excellent	5 - almost satisfactory
9 - very good	4 - unsatisfactory
8 - good	3 - very unsatisfactory
7 - very satisfactory	2 - poor
6 - satisfactory (pass)	1 - very poor