NICE TO MEET YOU
@ VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

LOOKING FURTHER
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Welcome to the Netherlands and to the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. We are delighted that you have chosen for our vibrant academic community.

Located in the cosmopolitan, yet compact, city of Amsterdam, we conduct cutting-edge research into problems of major societal and scientific importance. We are proud of our university, with its ambition to provide outstanding education, its committed teachers and researchers and excellent research facilities, its policy of active social engagement and its firm commitment to society. Our international character contributes towards the quality of our education, research and societal impact, and encourages our staff and students to look beyond their own horizons.

Consistent with our ambitions with respect to diversity, we are developing an international culture in which students and staff feel at home and seek out interaction. The VU Amsterdam campus is a meeting place for people of many nationalities, from many different backgrounds.

Looking further
We are a university with a heart, driven by a desire to generate knowledge with a strong orientation towards societal relevance. I hope this is one of the reasons you decided to come here. We ask and expect our students, researchers, PhD candidates and employees to look further and to expand their horizons; to look beyond the boundaries of their own field, culture, traditions and philosophy to become critical and socially engaged academics.

I hope you will feel at home on our campus and in Amsterdam to enjoy a formative episode in your life, gaining both intellectual and cultural inspiration.

Vinod Subramaniam  
Rector Magnificus
VU AMSTERDAM
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is an internationally renowned research university founded in 1880. The university offers over 120 English taught programmes at Bachelor’s, Master’s and doctoral level. Our campus is located in the business districts of Amsterdam. We offer services for all international students such as housing, visa and scholarships. With 23,000 students, of which 3000 are international, the university conducts cutting-edge research into problems of societal and scientific importance. The university distinguishes itself in research and education through four interdisciplinary themes: Human Health and Life Sciences, Science for Sustainability, Connected World and Governance for Society.

VU AMSTERDAM: THE PLACE TO BE
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam always strives for a combination of students and staff which reflects our diverse society. If you would like to contribute to the world of tomorrow and are looking for the best environment for your own development, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is the place to be. Working in one of our faculties means working for the world of tomorrow and today in an inspiring environment, with our campus located in the modern business district of Zuidas, close to the old city centre of Amsterdam.

www.vu.nl/en/about-vu-amsterdam
This brochure gives you a practical introduction to our university and general information about living in the Netherlands. It also provides an overview of rules and regulations relevant to expats – whether international employees, PhD candidates or guests – who will work at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands. But first things first: what do you need to know before you move?

GENERAL INFORMATION

- International Office of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for information and assistance with immigration procedures:
  www.vu.nl/internationaloffice
  E-mail immigration@vu.nl
  Tel. +31 (0)20 59 82867/83460/85396

- Human Resource Management: for general questions about personnel matters and the employment procedure please contact the HRM Servicedesk
  E-mail: servicedesk.hrm@vu.nl
  Tel. + 31 (0)20 59 82882
  (Monday to Friday from 08.30 - 17.00 hrs).

- Expatcenter Amsterdam as an intermediary for Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
  Expatcenter Amsterdam
NICE TO MEET YOU @ VU UNIVERSITY
1. VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM FROM A TO Z
A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO OUR UNIVERSITY

ADD TO YOUR FAVOURITES
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam’s website:
www.vuamsterdam.com

BIKE SHOP
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has its own bike shop on campus under the Main Building, which offers bicycles for sale and a repair service.

BOOKSHOP
The VU Amsterdam Bookshop is an independent academic bookshop located in the hall of the Main Building. There you will find books and professional literature, papers, magazines, stationery and postcards.
www.vuboekhandel.nl

CULTURAL CENTRE VU AMSTERDAM
The Griffioen Cultural Centre organizes a varied and exciting range of cultural courses, cabaret, music and theatre performances. Four music groups: VU Amsterdam Chamber Choir, VU Amsterdam Chamber Orchestra, VU Amsterdam Choir and VU Amsterdam Orchestra all give concerts at some of the leading venues in the country.
www.griffioen.vu.nl [text in Dutch]

DIRECTIONS TO VU AMSTERDAM
For directions to Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam follow the route description on www.vu.nl/en > About VU Amsterdam. Here you will also find maps of the VU Amsterdam Campus and VU Uilenstede.

EXPOSORIUM EXHIBITIONS
The Exposorium presents exhibitions of contemporary art, design and photography each year in its permanent exhibition area in the Main Building. In this way, the Exposorium attempts to create an intellectually and culturally stimulating environment for students, employees and visitors.

FACULTIES, RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND CENTRES
For a list of all faculties, research institutes and research centres of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, go to:
www.vuamsterdam.com

FACTS AND FIGURES
• Approx. 23,000 students
• 3,000 international Bachelor’s (BA, BSc), Master’s (MA, MSc) and exchange students
• 10 faculties on a single campus covering a wide spectrum of the arts, sciences, business and medicine
• 14 interdisciplinary research institutes
• Over 120 degree programmes taught in English

FOLLOW VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM ON SOCIAL MEDIA
  www.facebook.com/VUinternationalstudents
  itunes.apple.com/nl/institution/vrije-universiteit-amsterdam
  www.linkedin.com
  @VUamsterdam
  Vrije Universiteit International Students
The logo of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam depicts the griffin, a creature of myth and fable which can be traced back to some of the earliest works of art to emerge from the Near East. The griffin has the body of a lion and the head and the wings of an eagle. It was absorbed into the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome, and also features in the history of Christianity. The griffin represents the values embodied by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The spreading wings represent the quest for knowledge in complete freedom. The possession of knowledge brings with it responsibilities and these have to be addressed conscientiously. The griffin’s feet, planted firmly on the ground, represent VU Amsterdam’s commitment to the well-being of society as a whole. And like the griffin, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam cannot be summed up in a few words.

The Hortus Botanicus
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam’s Botanical Gardens, the Hortus Botanicus houses a collection of well over ten thousand species of plants in an area of approximately one hectare. The gardens and greenhouses are open on weekdays and on Saturdays from April through October. Entrance is free of charge. Anyone who is interested can become a Botanical Garden donor.

The HRM Department
Contact the HRM department via: servicedesk.hrm@vu.nl or via tel: +31 (0)20 59 82882

International Office
Contact the International Office for information and assistance with immigration procedures via: immigration@vu.nl or via tel. +31 (0)20 59 82867/83460/85396

Jobs/Vacancies at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
For academic vacancies and PhD positions at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam see:
www.workingatvu.nl
Who is ProVU?

→ a group of people that get active and speak up and stand up for the rights and needs of the PhDs and PostDocs of the VU and VUmc

→ YOU are ProVU: we are always looking for people who want to become active!

What are we doing?

Events
We work on building a social infrastructure through regular borrels and events

OR
we represent the PhDs and PostDocs of the VU on university level

i-ProVU
the international arm of ProVU working to assist international PhDs and PostDocs

PR
bringing together the PhDs and PostDocs at the VU and VUmc

Not receiving the newsletters?
Subscribe via provu.fpc@vu.nl

Wanna get involved?

We are always looking for enthusiastic PhDs and PostDocs to become active in one of our committees!

Science café
Tell your fellow PhDs and PostDocs about the interesting and fun aspects of your work or listen to others while having drinks!

Brown Bag lunches
Come to our informative lunches regarding VU happenings, HRM policies, ...

PhD day
go to high quality, relevant workshops and check out the info market before you enjoy the drinks and the closing event

... and lots of borrels, picnics, BBQs...

Wanna know more?
www.provu.nl
NEWS AND EVENTS
For all news and events related to Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, go to:
www.vu.nl/en/news-agenda

ORGANIZATION
Take a look at the organization chart or read more about the Supervisory Board, College of Deans, Executive Board, Academic Staff and VU Amsterdam Association.
About VU

PROVU
The interests of PhD candidates and postdocs employed by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam are represented by ProVU, which also provides practical tips and information regarding the PhD process: from courses and information on having a thesis printed, to postdoc career advice. The members of ProVU are volunteers from the PhD and postdoc community at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

QUESTIONS
For questions or information contact the International Office: e-mail: immigration@vu.nl
tel. +31 (0)20 59 82867/83460/85396
or contact the HRM Servicedesk:
email: servicedesk@vu.nl
tel. +31 (0)20 59 82882

RESTAURANTS
There are a number of restaurants for employees and students on the campus of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam: one is located in the Main Building and the others are in the Maths and Physics building and the Medical Faculty Building. There are also facilities at VU Amsterdam Uilenstede.

SMOKING POLICY
Smoking is prohibited in all of the campus buildings.

SPORTS CENTRE VU AMSTERDAM
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has its own sports centre with a wide range of sports facilities.

The Sports Centre offers employees of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam a free corporate sports programme.

TOP RESEARCHERS
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam employs many researchers who are among the best in their respective fields at an international level. Our hall of fame includes top researchers who have received prestigious awards, grants, prizes and honorary appointments for their academic achievements during their time at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam’s library has a collection of well over one million titles (books and journals) dating from the fifteenth century to the present. In addition, the University Library also provides access to numerous online journals and databases. A large part of the collection is available for loan.

VUNET
VUnet is the website for VU Amsterdam employees, guests and students. Here you will find personalized information. In order to access this part of the website you need a VUnet ID. New employees, guests and students will receive a VUnetID and password when their registration is completed. You will receive VUnetID and password in two separate e-mails at your private e-mail address.

WHO IS WHO AT VU UNIVERSITY
Go to People search. Here you can search for information on Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam employees: names, e-mail addresses, telephone and room numbers, faculties and services.
Or go to Scientific staff. Here you will find an overview of the academic staff at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, by faculty and/or research group.

X,Y&Z
Xtremely difficult to find, but we are open to suggestions!
International employees, guests and PhD candidates who will work at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for long or short periods are subject to Dutch and European immigration legislation. This involves the legal right both to stay and to work in the Netherlands. Your specific situation will determine the arrangements that you will need to make. A number of criteria are relevant to this, such as your nationality and how long you plan to stay.

The International Office of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam will be able to provide you, and any family members who will be accompanying you, with assistance in immigration procedures.

For information and assistance with immigration procedures, visit www.vu.nl/international, e-mail immigration@vu.nl, tel. +31 (0)20 59 82867

**NATIONALITY: EU/NON-EU?**
- Those who originate from a country which is part of the European Union or Switzerland are not required to apply for a residence permit or a work permit. For a complete list of EU/Non-EU countries, please check on the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) website.
- Those who originate from a Non-EU country might need a visa. This depends on the duration of your stay.

**DURATION OF STAY?**
**Less than 90 days: Short-stay visa:** Visum Kort Verblijf, VKV  
A short-stay visa entitles you to stay in the Netherlands, and the Schengen area, for 90 days or less. Whether you need a short-stay visa will depend on your nationality. A list of nationalities for which a short-stay visa is not required can be found on the IND website. If you require a visa, you need to apply for this yourself from the Dutch Embassy in your home country. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam cannot arrange this for you. Citizens of countries that do not require an entry visa are permitted to stay in the Netherlands for a maximum of 90 days without a short-stay visa. This is known as a stay within the permitted period (verblijf in de vrije termijn).

**More than 90 days:** Machtiging Voorlopig Verblijf (MVV) and/or Verblijfsvergunning Regulier (VVR)  
Persons from outside the EU/EEA who wish to stay in the Netherlands for a period of more than 90 days will need an residencepermit ‘VVR’ (Verblijfsvergunning Regulier). For some nationalities an ‘authorization for a temporary stay’, (MVV) is required in order to enter the Netherlands. A list of nationalities for which a MVV visa is required can be found on the IND website.
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam can under most circumstances use one of the accelerated application procedures on your behalf, like the ‘Procedure for highly skilled migrants’, which applies to academic staff and ‘Researchers under the EU Directive’ for guests/scholarships. It will need to be established whether you fall into one of these categories. You can find extensive information on the IND website.

**WORK PERMIT:** TWV  
In general Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam will have to apply for a work permit for you if you do not have the nationality of an EU/EEA member state or Switzerland. However, scientific researchers and knowledge migrants are often exempt from this requirement. The Immigration Office can tell you whether a work permit is necessary in your case. If it is, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam will submit a request on your behalf. The procedure usually takes about five weeks.
As it can be very difficult (and expensive) to find a room in Amsterdam our International Office has reserved some accommodation for international PhD’s and guests. Once the supervisor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam registered you as an international guest or employee you will receive an invitation to apply for accommodation arranged via our International Office.

SHORT STAY HOUSING
Depending on the availability, we can offer our international PhD’s, visiting staff, Post Docs and guests accommodation for a minimum period of one month and a maximum period of one year in the Short Stay Housing. This type of accommodation generally concerns complete furnished studios with private facilities. More information about the studios in Short Stay housing.

PHD HOUSING
For our international PhD students at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam we have a very limited number of studios and small apartments available that can be rented for the complete period of the PhD project with a maximum of 5 years. This type of accommodation generally concerns unfurnished studios with private facilities. More information about the different apartments in PhD housing.
We have limited housing available for families and couples. Should you arrive as a couple or family it is recommended to keep your eyes open for alternative accommodation as well. For more information about accommodation for PhD students and Guests, check our website.
3. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU MOVE TO THE NETHERLANDS?

Moving to another country might be a new experience for you. Below we provide a checklist to help you to prepare your move.

DO YOU HAVE A VALID PASSPORT?
You must have a valid passport or form of identification at all times. It is necessary to show a copy of a valid passport when applying for an entry visa. If your passport is due to expire in the near future, it is advisable to apply for a new passport before beginning the immigration procedure.

ARE YOU BRINGING FAMILY MEMBERS WITH YOU?
If you, as a future employee or guest of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, wish to bring your partner or children with you to the Netherlands it is important for the University to know this before we start the immigration procedure. The University can assist you with the immigration procedure.

For this type of application you will need a number of specific documents. You need a copy of a valid form of identification, but also documents such as your marriage certificate if you are bringing a spouse and/or a birth certificate if you are bringing a child with you. Non-married couples may also initiate immigration procedures together. The documents which are necessary in such cases depend on the specific situation. There is also a standard fee for people wishing to bring their family to the Netherlands.

When you are bringing family you will also need to provide us the birth certificates of all the persons who are coming with you. All birth and marriage certificates must be in or translated into Dutch, English, French or German. If the documents are in another language, you can obtain information about translating and certifying these kinds of documents from the Dutch Embassy of your home country.

The International Office of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam can provide you with all the necessary information and will help you through the procedure of obtaining a MVV and/or VVR for you and your family.

DO YOU RESIDE IN A THIRD COUNTRY?
If you need an entry visa for the Netherlands and live in a country of which you are not a national, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam can arrange the visa at the Dutch Embassy in your country of residence. A copy of your residence permit for the third country is required. Please note that you will still have to present the documents mentioned above (such as your birth certificate) when you report to the Dutch Embassy. If you do not have the documents needed, try to obtain these in your home country or consult your embassy for information and help.

DO YOU HAVE OFFICIALLY TRANSLATED, LEGALLY CERTIFIED DOCUMENTS such as a birth certificate, marriage certificate, degree certificate, grant declaration or other relevant documents?
You may have to provide IND, the Dutch Embassy or the Dutch municipal authorities with documents such as marriage or birth certificates. For instance, the Dutch Embassy in your home country may ask for your birth certificate when you are applying for your visa as confirmation of your identity. If you wish to bring your spouse to the Netherlands with you, you will need to provide a marriage certificate as well as both birth certificates. Please remember to also bring the birth certificates of any children who will accompany you. All birth and marriage certificates must be in or translated into Dutch, English, French or German. If the documents are in another language, you can obtain information about
translating and certifying these kinds of documents from the Dutch Embassy of your home country. You will also need these documents once you have arrived in the Netherlands in order to register with the municipality in which you live. Please note that any foreign document that you present to the Dutch government has to be legalised.

LEGALISATION OF DOCUMENTS
Legalisation is a procedure that serves to confirm a few things. Firstly, that the document was issued by someone with the authority to issue it. Secondly, it confirms that the signatures on the document are genuine. If a foreign document has been legalised, the Dutch authorities know that it is legally valid in the Netherlands. A properly legalised document contains a minimum of three signatures and stamps, issued by the following authorities:
1. The person or authority that issued the document (e.g. a municipal registrar).
2. One or several higher authorities in the country of issue. The highest authority required to sign and stamp is usually the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
3. The Dutch embassy or consulate in the country of issue.

If you encounter difficulties with the legalisation process, we advise you to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the country of issue. We recommend to start early. It may take several months to collect all the necessary stamps and signatures. If the country in which the document was issued has signed the Apostille Convention, the procedure is easier. In that case, your document does not require legalisation by the Dutch embassy or consulate. Affixing an apostille, issued by the designated authority in the country of issue, will suffice. Contact the designated authority for further information on how to obtain an apostille.
Further information is also available on the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

WHAT TO BRING?
Check your airline for the quotes on goods to bring. You can also check the Dutch Customs website on what kind of goods you are allowed to bring into the country. If you are bringing portable appliances, make sure they are compatible with wall outlets in the Netherlands that have a voltage of 220. Voltage can easily be converted with the use of transformers on most appliances (up to 1,000 watts). These may be bought from expats leaving The Netherlands or from most hardware stores. As for clothing, the Netherlands is a multi-national country with no dress code. Dutch people tend to dress casually, but neatly. Even in the work place, dress codes are often quite relaxed. Make sure you bring along clothes that can withstand the Dutch weather. Warm sweaters, long trousers, a warm coat and cold weather shoes are no luxury. In summer and spring the weather can be soft, but in autumn and winter, you will be happy you have brought some warm clothes.

FINDING SHORT/LONG-TERM ACCOMMODATION IN THE NETHERLANDS
With a general housing shortage and long waiting lists for subsidized housing, finding a place in Amsterdam can be quite an undertaking. It is likely that the range and style of accommodation available is also quite different from what you are used to. It might prove quite a challenge to find suitable accommodation that fits your budget.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers accommodation for PhD students, employees and guests both for short stay as for long stay.
• Short stay: Depending on the availability, we offer accommodation for a minimum period of one month up to a maximum period of one year. This type of accommodation concerns furnished studios with private facilities.
• Long stay: Vrije Universiteit also has a limited number of studios available for PhD students for the complete period of the PhD project or for a maximum period of 5 years. This type of accommodation concerns unfurnished studios with private facilities.
We advise you to file your application well in advance to have the best chance of finding housing upon arrival. Please see www.vu.nl/accommodation for more information.

REMUNERATION OF REMOVAL EXPENSES
Please consult your supervisor (contact person) at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam to see if you are eligible for remuneration for your removal expenses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING TO THE NETHERLANDS:
Expatcenter Amsterdam
Euraxess
Below you can find a few focus points concerning your arrival in the Netherlands.

Please inform the International Office of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam about your arrival date, so we can inform you about the required formalities and schedule an appointment for you at the Expatcenter. The Expatcenter provides a one-stop service for guests and employees of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Here you will be able to arrange the required permits and registrations (applicable) for your stay in the Netherlands:

**COLLECTING YOUR RESIDENCE PERMIT**
(=Verblijfsvergunning Regulier, VVR)
If you need a MVV to enter the Netherlands you will be able to collect your residence permit immediately at the Expatcenter.
If you are exempted from the obligation to have a MVV, and you can enter the Netherlands with your passport, you will need to have your biometrics (fingerprints, digital signature and passport photo) taken at the Expatcenter. About two weeks later you will receive a letter mentioning you can collect your residence permit at the IND-office.

**REGISTERING IN THE MUNICIPAL PERSONAL RECORDS DATABASE**
(Basisregistratie Personen BRP)
Registering at your local municipality is a mandatory procedure if you intend to stay longer than 4 months, irrespective of your nationality. The registration is done in person at the Expatcenter in case you will be residing in Amsterdam or Amstelveen. All family members that will be registered must be present. No registration fees apply. The database is used as a source of information by various other organizations, including IND, the Dutch Tax Administration and the Social Insurance Bank. These organizations rely on the address details as listed in the Municipal Personal Records Database.

International employees, PhD candidates and guests of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam from outside the EU/EER can only register with the Municipal Personal Records Database after they have applied for a standard residence permit from the IND. Both registrations will be arranged during your appointment at the Expatcenter.

**THE CITIZEN SERVICE NUMBER**
(Burgerservicenummer, BSN)
After registering with the Municipal Personal Records Database (GBA), you will automatically be allocated a citizen service number (BSN), which will be sent to your home address in the Netherlands. The citizen service number (BSN) is a unique personal number allocated to everyone registered in the Municipal Personal Records Database. The citizen service number is recorded on passports, driving licences and identity cards and is required to receive a salary or to open a bank account at a Dutch bank.

After your visit at The Expatcenter you will have to arrange a few other affairs (if applicable)

**SETTING UP A LOCAL BANK ACCOUNT**
Next to The Expatcenter you will find a local branch office of ABN AMRO bank. You are free to open an account at any bank you wish in the Netherlands. However, international employees, PhD candidates and guests of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam generally have an account at ABN AMRO Bank. International employees and PhD candidates need to show a valid passport at the bank as well as a copy of your employment contract with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Guests need to show a valid passport and a declaration of courtesy privileges from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. You must also be able to provide proof of your Dutch address, such as a copy of the rental agreement or a utility bill. Furthermore, you must provide the bank with your citizen service number within four weeks.
APPLYING FOR A DIGID

DigiD stands for Digital Identity and is needed for tax purposes. A DigiD allows users to access a great number of online services offered by Dutch government agencies. DigiD is only available to people who are registered in a Dutch municipality and have a BSN number [citizen service number]. Apply for a DigiD at: www.digid.nl/english

ARRANGING INSURANCE

Health insurance (obligatory)

If you are a resident of the Netherlands, you are obliged by Dutch law to take out Dutch health insurance, even if you are already insured back home. This ensures that every person is protected against the financial risks of illness and hospital admission. Depending on your status, you are obliged to take out:

Collective health insurance via Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (for employees only)

International employees and PhD candidates of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam can take out health insurance from any Dutch health insurance company. However, the university has a group contract with Zilveren Kruis Achmea and it is therefore advisable to take out health insurance with this company. You can arrange this on the basis of an official decision of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service [IND] and with your citizen service number. You will also need to show a copy of your actual residence permit within four months, otherwise you will be fined. Information: www.zk.nl/vu-adam, tel. +31 (0)71 7510025

You are free to choose your own health insurer [zorgverzekeraar] offering the basic package [basisverzekering] and are allowed to change insurers once a year. To register for health insurance you will require a citizen service number [BSN].

International guests of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam can only take out health insurance with a private firm such as Lippmann/Meeus or AON. Information: www.euraxess.nl

Please note: If you are not covered by Dutch health insurance, you risk being fined and billed retroactively for the months you were not insured. For more information about health insurance please check the Euraxess website, or The Expatcenter.

Personal Liability Insurance

[Aansprakelijkheidsverzekering voor Particulieren, AVP]

In the Netherlands, you are legally liable if someone suffers damage due to a mistake made or an accident caused by you. This means you must compensate the other party for the damage suffered. Personal Liability Insurance [AVP] protects you against this. AVP covers almost all damage for which you, as a private individual, can be held liable, regardless of how the incident in question occurred. The cost of damages can be quite considerable. AVP will also cover damage that your child or pet might cause. However, damage caused by motor vehicles, for example, through a collision, is not covered by AVP. For this, you must take out Third Party Insurance [WA-verzekering] via a car insurer.

Car insurance and driver’s licence

If you have your own car, motorbike or moped while living in the Netherlands you are required to insure yourself against legal liability through Third Party Insurance [WA-verzekering]. You are then insured against damage you may cause with your vehicle. Damage to your vehicle, however, is not covered. You can supplement your Third Party Insurance with All Risk Cover [cascodekking]. This provides insurance for the car itself but not its contents. For more information about these types of insurance read the information on: www.iamsterdam.com/en/living/official-matters/insurance

Collective car insurance via Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (for employees only)

International employees and PhD candidates of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam can take out car insurance via the University’s group contract with Aon Nederland. For information and premiums, contact: Service Center Aon Verzekeringen, tel. +31 (0) 71 364 35 30 [open from 08:00 to 18:00] www.viamijnwerk.nl/vu (Dutch only)
Obtaining a driver’s licence or exchanging your current licence
If you intend to drive a car in the Netherlands, you will need to pay close attention to the rules pertaining to driver’s licences. If you plan to remain in the country for an extended period you may need to exchange your current licence for a Dutch one. Please note, this must be done before your current licence expires.

House contents insurance
(Inboedelverzekering)
Fire and theft can cause unforeseen damage and expense – you can insure yourself against them. In some larger cities, you will always have an excess (eigen risico) for theft. There is also a maximum insurance payout for audiovisual equipment such TVs or DVDs. It is important to make sure you have proper cover. Your house contents must be insured at replacement value. If your cover is too low, the insurer will pay out less, even for minor damage. This will mean that the money is insufficient to replace old articles with new.

LEAVING THE NETHERLANDS

Deregister from the Municipal Personal Records Database (GBA)
Deregistering from the Municipal Database is necessary. The municipality removes your personal details from the database and informs other government authorities of your departure. www.iamsterdam.com/en/living/official-matters/deregistration

Hand in your residence permit
Your residence permit is property of the Dutch government. Therefore, you have to hand it in before you leave the Netherlands. You can do this at the nearest IND desk. It is also possible to send the residence document to the following address:
IND Bureau Documenten
Postbus 7025
8007 HA Zwolle

Before you return your residence document, please be advised to make a copy of both the front as well as the back of the card for possible future reference.

EXTENDING YOUR STAY IN THE NETHERLANDS
If you want to extend your stay in the Netherlands you will need to extend your residence permit. Your residence permit is only valid for a certain period of time. Usually this is linked to your employment contract or the courtesy privileges agreement you have signed with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. After the expiry date of your residence permit, you have to leave the Netherlands as soon as possible. If you need to extend your residence permit please make sure you start the application well in advance. You can consult the International Office for advice and help in this regard.
5. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

(1) EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers a broad and attractive range of employment conditions; for example the Optional Model to select a personalized package of employment conditions.

The employment contract is governed by the Collective Labour Agreement [CAO] for Dutch Universities. In addition to their salaries, staff members receive annual holiday pay and a year-end bonus. Staff members with a full-time contract (38 hours per week) are entitled to 29 days paid vacation leave.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam also offers a pension scheme via ABP and the opportunity to join a collective health insurance scheme, as well as a commuting allowance based on public transport and a bicycle scheme. Where possible there is also scope for flexible working hours and the possibility of scheduling an employee’s working hours and days off in a number of ways (a full-time position is 38 hours a week).


(2) PERSONNEL GUIDE
You will receive the Personnel Guide with the employment contract. It contains a brief summary of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam’s terms and conditions of employment, regulations and amenities.

(3) VUNET ID
New employees, guests and students will receive a VUnetID and password when their registration is completed. The VUnetID and password will be sent [in separate e-mails] to your personal e-mail address.

(4) HRM SERVICEDESK
The HRM Servicedesk is available to answer all your general questions about personnel matters and HRM self-service options in VUnet. For any other questions and requests, you can contact the personnel consultant of your faculty.

(5) HRM ON VUNET
You can find almost all personnel matters on VUnet. Furthermore you can arrange your personnel matters using the self-service options. For access to VUnet you need your VUnetID. The address of VUnet is https://vunet.vu.nl.

(6) PAYSLIP
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam will send your first payslip by post. After that, you will only be able to access your salary specifics via the Self Services section on VUnet. Furthermore, you can also find explanation of your monthly payslip here.
Events which are work related and which can affect your income are covered under employee insurance schemes. Nearly all Dutch employees will be covered by these employee insurance schemes. Note: you will only be covered by these schemes if you are employed. If you are undertaking research on a stipend and without an employment contract, you do not take part in these employee insurance schemes.

These schemes provide cover for loss of income due to:
- unemployment (WW)
- accidents at work – occupational disability (WIA)
- illness (ZW)

The employee insurance scheme contributions are paid by your employer and yourself. On your payslip you can see how much of your gross salary you contribute to these schemes.

Events which are non-work related but which can affect your income are covered under national insurance schemes. Every Dutch resident and nearly all foreign employees working in the Netherlands are covered by these. However, if you do research on a stipend you might not fall under these schemes. Another exemption applies to EU citizens covered by the social security system of another EU country. In the Netherlands, there is a scheme for:
- state pension (AOW)
- surviving dependents (ANW) – which provides for widows, widowers and dependent children who have lost one or both parents (SVB)
- extra cost of having children – Child benefit (AKW)
- healthcare (ZVW)
- exceptional medical expenses (AWBZ)
- against poverty (WWB)

Another important aspect is that people from EU countries who work in several countries are only covered by the social security system of one country. So even though they work in the Netherlands, they might not be covered by the Dutch social security. People from non-EU countries are usually covered by Dutch social security if they are employed in the Netherlands by a Dutch employer.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY STATUS
When you are an employee in the Netherlands, several different rules and legislation will together determine your social security status. In addition to your participation in national social security schemes, there are working conditions and collective labour agreements. You are employed only when you have an employment contract with your employer. From the start of your contract, you as an employee participate in the Dutch social security system, both in the national insurance schemes and the employee insurance schemes. Furthermore, employees also participate in the company’s occupational pension scheme. The contributions to the social security system and the company’s pension scheme are partly paid by your employer and partly paid by yourself out of your gross salary. On your payslip you can see what you contribute.
These insurances are paid for with taxes. When you pay income tax part of your taxes are allocated to these insurance schemes. However, if you are not paying income tax but you are a resident you will still be covered by these schemes.

If you live in the Netherlands temporarily and are not working here as an employee you will not be covered by these national insurance schemes.

Please note that anyone participating in Dutch national insurance schemes has the obligation to take out a Dutch public healthcare insurance (so-called basisverzekering). This also applied to you if you have an employment contract with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

OTHER SOCIAL PROVISIONS
There are many other forms of social provision, such as the following allowances:

- healthcare allowance, to compensate lower incomes for the cost of public healthcare insurance
- rent allowance, to compensate lower incomes for rent
- childcare allowance, to compensate for the cost of childcare facilities

When you are an EU citizen IND registration is not required but this does assist in certain circumstances, one of which is when you want to apply for one of the allowances (EU-citizen and allowances).

As mentioned, what is applicable will depend on your specific situation. For more information, consult www.euraxess.nl or Sociale Verzekeringsbank (SVB) or one of the websites mentioned below.

Other sources of information on Dutch social security
- www.expatica.nl – Dutch social security system explained
- The website of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment provides information on the Dutch social security system: www.government.nl/issues/social-policy
- www.eurofound.europa.eu/ – Netherlands social security
   This is the website of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

NO EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT AND SOCIAL SECURITY STATUS
(for guest researchers, guest PhD’s and students)

Are you doing research in the Netherlands without being employed?

Foreign researchers who are not employed but are financed through some form of stipend or scholarship may participate in the national insurance scheme. However, they do not participate in the employee insurance scheme or have secondary employment rights, although they can apply for certain allowances. What is applicable will depend on your specific situation.

If you do not have an employment contract for your research activities, you will not participate in employee insurance schemes (see above). However, you can apply for a healthcare allowance or housing allowance. Unfortunately, you do not have the right to apply for a childcare allowance.
7. THE DUTCH INCOME TAX SYSTEM EXPLAINED (FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY)

TAX SYSTEM
In the Netherlands, income tax is charged on three different types of income, with each type of income classified into a separate regime or ‘box’ as follows:

1. Box 1: Income from employment and home ownership
2. Box 2: Income from substantial interest in a corporation
3. Box 3: Income from savings and investments

RESIDENCE
The taxation of an expat working in the Netherlands depends upon whether the expat can be classified either as a resident or a non-resident taxpayer. Whether an expat can be considered a resident for Dutch tax purposes depends on the facts and circumstances. Based on Dutch case law, certain criteria are important for determining residence, such as family residence, the location of the expat’s permanent home, the intention of the expat, registration in a municipal register and the expat’s economic and social ties to the Netherlands.

TAX TREATIES
The Netherlands has concluded tax conventions with many nations. These conventions apply to people employed in the Netherlands but not permanently residing in the Netherlands. The employment income of foreign professors and other teachers – sometimes researchers as well – usually remains taxed in their country of origin for the first two years.

INCOME TAX
Everyone in the Netherlands is taxed on their income, wealth and assets (inkomstenbelasting). The amount of income tax (loonheffing) you pay depends on your level of income and will be automatically deducted from your monthly salary.

30% RULE
Dutch employers may pay expats who have specific expertise that is scarce in the Dutch labour market 30% of their wages as a tax-free allowance for extraterritorial expenses, without the need to submit further evidence. Application of the 30% rule requires the permission of the Dutch Tax Administration. The expat and the employer will have to file a joint request to the tax authorities for this. The Tax Administration will assess whether the employee has scarce expertise, depending on their education, experience and income.

- Dutch Tax Administration: www.belastingdienst.nl (English and German website available)
  Tax information, foreign countries: tel.: 055 5 385 385 (in the Netherlands)
  Tax information, foreign countries: tel. +31 555 385 385 (from abroad)
  Monday to Thursday from 8.00 to 20.00, Friday from 8.00 to 17.00.
- The Expatcenter Amsterdam. They can assist with the 30% ruling application.
- Orange Tax Services: www.orangetax.nl. They can assist the employer and the employee jointly with the 30% ruling application. Orange Tax works on a no cure no pay basis for a fee of EUR 500. This means you pay nothing if the ruling is not granted, and you only pay EUR 500 if the application is successful. Orange Tax can also assist you with your individual income tax file, which can be complicated when you are being granted the 30% ruling.
NICE TO MEET YOU @ VU UNIVERSITY
8. LIVING IN THE NETHERLANDS; PRACTICALITIES AND TIPS

FINDING A LOCAL DOCTOR
General practitioners in the Netherlands play an important role in the healthcare system. The general practitioner (huisarts) is the first port of call if you have health problems. Doctors have their practices in residential areas and operate on an appointment system. If necessary, the doctor will refer patients to a specialist at a hospital. For more information please check The Expatcenter.

WHERE TO GO IN THE CASE OF A MEDICAL EMERGENCY
Emergency specialist help is offered by A & E departments (EHBO-post) in Amsterdam hospitals: The national alarm number in case of fire, or for police or an ambulance is 112 and should only be used in emergencies and life-threatening situations. Please call the police on 0900-8844 for assistance and advice and in the case of ‘no flashlight’. You can call the VU emergency number outside office hours: +31 (0)20 6444117. This is a contact number for further assistance. During office hours you can call the secretariat of the International Office: +31 (0)20 5989097.

FINDING A DENTIST
Generally speaking, the Dutch tend to take exceptional care of their teeth. It is common practice in the Netherlands to visit a dentist (tandarts) once or twice a year for a check-up (controle). To find a dentist just ask around. Friends, neighbours or your GP may know of someone.

FINDING A PHARMACY
You can go to any pharmacy in your area – please consult your GP for a pharmacy nearby.

GET CONNECTED: INTERNET, TELEPHONE, UTILITIES CHECK THE EXPATCENTER

INVESTIGATING SCHOOLING AND CHILDCARE IN THE NETHERLANDS
The Dutch education system
Children living in the Netherlands are required to attend school from the age of five until the end of the year of their sixteenth birthday. In practice, almost all children in the Netherlands are in school from the age of four. You are free to choose a Dutch or International school for your children. For more information about the regulations and schools in the Amsterdam area: The Expatcenter

Childcare services
In the Netherlands, it is common for working parents to send their children to a crèche or childcare centre (kinderopvang) during the day if they are too young for school. It is not unusual to encounter waiting lists of several months for certain facilities.
- Kinderdagverblijf KinderRijk offers childcare near the VU Amsterdam Main Building. Go to:
- For more information about rules, regulations and childcare centres in Amsterdam, go to: The Expatcenter

LEARNING DUTCH
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers courses in Dutch for non-native speakers: ‘Dutch as a Second Language’

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND GETTING AROUND AMSTERDAM AND THE NETHERLANDS
You can travel by public transport – metro, tram or bus – with the national OV-chipkaart (public transport chip card). Or use the most popular form of transportation in
Amsterdam: the bicycle. Scooters are also very popular. The inner city of Amsterdam is also compact enough to get around by foot.

MEETING PEOPLE: JOINING A GROUP, CLUB OR ASSOCIATION

- **ACCESS** is a non-profit organization which supports the international community in the Netherlands. Volunteer staff can answer questions and provide information on expat issues: www.access-nl.org
- **In Players** is Amsterdam’s oldest English-language theatre company and welcomes anyone with an interest in theatre: www.inplayers.org
- **Junior Chamber International (JCI) Amsterdam** is an international organization of young professionals between the ages of 25 and 40. The club promotes networking as well as the development of personal and management skills: www.jciai.nl
- **Legal Aliens** is a fast-growing, fun-loving group of expats who meet for social events across the Netherlands. Members come from all walks of life, both expats and Dutch alike: www.legalaliens.eu
- **MEETinAMSTERDAM** offers a relaxed social environment for 20 and 30 somethings. They offer a wide range of weekly activities in the area and trips further afield.
- **Other international groups and clubs:**

WHAT’S ON

For upcoming gigs, classical concerts, theatre performances, opera, events, festivals, comedy shows, museums and exhibitions buy your tickets at The Ticketshop, just around the corner from the famous pop temple, Paradiso, and the music venue, The Melkweg. The Ticketshop is also home to the Tourist Information Desk, where trained staff is always on hand to answer questions and point you in the right direction. See www.iamsterdam.com/en/whats-on, which includes a wizard if you need help finding events you like.
NICE TO MEET YOU @ VU UNIVERSITY
9. USEFUL ADDRESSES AND LINKS

- International Office of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for information and assistance
  www.vu.nl/international
  immigration@vu.nl
  +31 20 59 82867/83460/85396

- HRM department for general questions about personnel matters and the employment procedure:
  servicedesk.hrm@vu.nl
  +31 20 59 82882

- ProVU
  http://provu.nl > Research > PhD doctoral > ProVU

- Expatcenter Amsterdam
  www.iamsterdam.com/en/living/expatcenter

- Immigration procedures via the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND)
  https://ind.nl/en

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
  www.minbuza.nl/en

- EURAXESS for information about practicalities, immigration procedures and daily life.
  www.euraxess.nl

- Municipality of Amsterdam
  www.iamsterdam.com/

- Municipality of Amstelveen
  www.amstelveen.nl

- Tax Authorities
  Dutch Tax Administration: www.belastingdienst.nl

- ABN AMRO bank
  www.abnamro.nl/en/index.html

- Collective insurances via Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for international employees and PhD candidates (not for international guests)
  collective health insurance: www.zk.nl/vu-adam
  collective car insurance: www.aonauto.nl – entry code (toegangscode) 00374

- Accommodation via Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
  http://www.vu.nl/en/research/taking-phd/phd-guest-accommodation

- Public transport in Amsterdam and the Netherlands
  www.ov-chipkaart.nl/?taal=en

- Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
  www.vuamsterdam.com

- More information on work and non-work related issues: www.newtoholland.nl