

1. How much time do I have to apply for the orientation year after my graduation or my scientific research in the Netherlands?

You can apply for the orientation year until 3 years after your graduation date or the expiry date of your residence permit for scientific research. If you want to prevent a residence gap (an interruption in your lawful residency), you will have to apply before your residence permit for study purposes or scientific research expires. If you prefer to apply later, after your residence permit has expired, and you are not [exempt](#) from the MVV requirement (see question 16), you can apply at a Dutch representation (embassy or consulate) abroad.

2. Can I apply online?

You can apply online at <http://ind.nl/searchyear>, but you need to have DigiD with sms-code or the DigiD app to do this. You pay the costs of the application immediately with iDEAL. You cannot pay by credit card. This is mostly the fastest way to apply for the orientation year.

It is not possible to apply for a DigiD and to apply for the orientation year online if you do not have a Dutch citizen service number ('burgerservicenummer' or 'BSN').

3. How long does the application process take?

The application process in all cases (in the Netherlands and abroad) may take up to 90 days. Only if you apply online and your application is complete, the IND strives to handle your application in two weeks (three weeks including making your residence document).

4. I graduated in the Netherlands, but I do not have my diploma yet. Can I apply for the orientation year?

Yes. If you do not receive your diploma immediately after your graduation, you can add the appendix 'Statement on completion of study' of the application form to your application. This appendix has to be completed and signed by your educational institution. You cannot use the 'Statement on completion of study' if you graduated abroad.

5. Is my residence permit for study purposes still valid after my graduation in the Netherlands?

A residence permit for study purposes is always issued for the duration of the study programme plus 3 months. When you graduate, your residence permit for study purposes will remain valid until 3 months after you are deregistered from your educational institution, or until the start date of your orientation year. This does not apply if you end your study programme without graduating.

6. When does the orientation year start

- *You do not have a valid Dutch residence permit or you have a Dutch residence permit for study purposes when you apply:*
If a residence permit for the orientation year is granted to you, it will start on the application date if you have submitted all requested documents with the application and if you qualify for the orientation year at that moment, even if the decision is made after that date.
- *You have a Dutch residence permit for the purpose of scientific research (or a 'highly skilled migrant' residence permit to perform scientific research) when you apply:*
If a residence permit for the orientation year is granted to you and your employment contract or hosting agreement is not ended prematurely, it will start immediately after your current residence permit expires. If your employment contract or hosting agreement is ended prematurely, your residence permit for the orientation year will start on the date your employment contract or hosting agreement ends or on the application date, whichever comes last.
- *You apply at a Dutch representation abroad:*
If an MVV (see question 15) is granted to you, you will automatically obtain a residence permit after arriving in the Netherlands. Your residence permit will start on the day after the date the MVV sticker is placed in your passport by the Dutch representation. You can also choose to have your residence permit start on your entry date in the Netherlands. In this case you need to inform the IND about your entry date before you enter the Netherlands. Please take into account that it will take one or two weeks to make your residence document.

7. How soon can I start working after I have applied for the orientation year in the Netherlands?

If you want to start working soon, it is recommended that you apply for the orientation year online. The IND strives to handle your online application in two weeks if it is complete. In general, you can collect your residence permit within a week after your application has been handled.

If you cannot wait three weeks, because you have already found a job and your employment contract starts within three weeks, you can get a (free) residence endorsement sticker in your passport at an IND desk. The sticker will be valid while your application is pending and states that you reside legally in the Netherlands and that you have free access to the Dutch labour market. This means you can start working immediately after you have collected the sticker. You do not have to wait for the residence permit itself.

If you apply online or by post and your application is complete, you can get the sticker after your application has been registered. You will have to make an appointment online to collect the sticker: <https://ind.nl/en/Pages/Making-an-appointment-online.aspx>.

If you apply at an IND desk, you can get the sticker immediately if you submit all requested documents with your application. You will have to make an appointment by phone if you want to submit your application at an IND desk.

8. Can I do an internship or work as a freelancer or start my own company during the orientation year?

Yes, you are allowed to accept any (temporary) job, including internships (paid or unpaid), during the orientation year. You are also allowed to work as a freelancer or to start your own company during the orientation year. You have free access to the Dutch labour market during the orientation year, without restrictions.

9. What are the benefits of an orientation year?

You are granted free access to the Dutch labour market during the orientation year. This means that there is no salary criterion and that an employer does not have to apply for a work permit for you. Furthermore, the [reduced salary criterion](#) applies to you when you find a job as a highly skilled migrant. This may encourage an employer to hire you.

You can find the conditions for a highly skilled migrant residence permit on the website of the IND: <https://ind.nl/en/work/Pages/Highly-skilled-migrant.aspx>.

10. If I already found a job as a highly skilled migrant without needing an orientation year first, am I still eligible for the reduced salary criterion?

Yes, you are. If you qualify for the orientation year, but you do not apply for it because you already found a job as a highly skilled migrant, your employer can still make use of the [reduced salary criterion](#).

The reduced salary criterion does not apply to you if you previously had a residence permit for the orientation year on the basis of the same study programme or the same scientific research, and no application for a residence permit for 'work as highly skilled migrant' was submitted for you during or directly following this orientation year.

11. Can I still apply for the orientation year if I have had a residence permit for paid employment or for working as a highly skilled migrant immediately after graduating or performing scientific research?

Yes, that is possible. You can apply for the orientation year until 3 years after your graduation date or the expiry date of your residence permit for scientific research, regardless whether you have had a residence permit for paid employment or for working as a highly skilled migrant in the meantime or not.

12. Will my employer have to apply for a new residence permit for me, immediately after I have found a job as a highly skilled migrant during the orientation year?

No, that is not necessary. You have free access to the Dutch labour market during the orientation year, so your employer can wait until the end of your orientation year before he applies for a new residence permit for you.

13. If my contract ends, but I did find another job / employer, will the reduced salary criterion remain?

Yes, if you change jobs or employers, your new employer can still make use of the reduced salary criterion. This reduced salary criterion applies to you for as long as you keep working as a highly skilled migrant continuously, even if you turn 30 or change employers. Make sure that you avoid a residence gap. This means your new employer should apply for an extension of the validity of your residence permit before your current one expires (the start and end date of your contract are similar to those of your residence permit for working as a highly skilled migrant).

14. How can I see if I have obtained a master's degree on the basis of an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course?

If you have completed an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course, you must have obtained a joint degree or multiple degrees, issued by at least two participating higher educational institutions. You can find all Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses here: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/library/emjmd-catalogue_en.

15. How can I apply for the orientation year while I am abroad?

Depending on your nationality, you may need a provisional residence permit (in Dutch: 'machtiging tot voorlopig verblijf' or 'MVV') if you want to settle in the Netherlands. An MVV is an entry visa that is required if you want to stay in the Netherlands for more than 90 days and your nationality or circumstances do not [exempt](#) you from the MVV requirement. You can start the Entry and Residence Procedure (TEV procedure) by applying for an MVV at a Dutch representation in your country of origin or continuous residence, or, if that is not possible, in a country nearby. The TEV procedure combines the application for an MVV and the application for a residence permit.

16. Am I exempt from the obligation to apply for an MVV if I have a valid residence permit issued by another member state of the European Union (EU) or by another Schengen member state?

That depends on the kind of residence permit you have. If you have an EU long-term residence permit issued by another member state of the EU, or if you resided in another member state of the EU for a period of 18 months as a holder of a European blue card, you are exempt from the obligation to apply for an MVV and you can apply for a residence permit directly in the Netherlands. This exemption from the MVV requirement also applies to you if you have a residence permit for scientific researchers under Directive 2005/71/EC issued by another EU member state. The exemption from the MVV requirement can apply to family members in these situations as well.

The exemption from the MVV requirement does **not** apply to you if you have a different residence permit (for example for study purposes) issued by another member state of the EU or by another Schengen member state.

17. Can I work in other Schengen member states with a Dutch residence permit for the orientation year?

No. A Dutch residence permit allows you to enter and exit the Netherlands and travel through the Schengen Area. However, a Dutch residence permit does not give you the right to work in other countries. If you want to work in another (Schengen member) state, you will have to apply for a residence permit and/or a work permit in that state.

Your stay in other Schengen member states is limited to a maximum of 90 days within a period of 180 days. If you intend to stay in another Schengen member state longer, you must comply with the immigration regulations of that country.

18. Can I use my residence permit for the orientation year to look for a job in the Netherlands while living abroad?

No. If you do not have and keep your [main residence](#) in the Netherlands during the orientation year, your residence permit can be revoked. Having main residence in the Netherlands is a key requirement to retain a Dutch residence permit.

19. Which ranking lists are used to determine whether I qualify for the orientation year with my foreign degree?

The following general ranking lists, current on your date of graduation or obtaining your PhD:

- [Times Higher Education World University Rankings](#)
- [QS World University Rankings](#)
- [Academic Ranking of World Universities](#)

The following ranking lists by subject, current on your date of graduation or obtaining your PhD:

- [Times Higher Education World University Rankings by subject](#)
- [QS World University Rankings by subject \(broad subject area\)](#)
- [QS World University Rankings by subject \(specific subject\)](#)
- [ShanghaiRanking's Global Ranking of Academic Subjects](#)

If your educational institution is, on the date of your graduation or obtaining your PhD, not listed in the top 200 of any of these general ranking lists or in the top 200 of any of these ranking lists by subject, that corresponds with your field of study or research field, you do not qualify for the orientation year.

20. Does my foreign diploma have to be evaluated by Nuffic?

Every foreign diploma has to be evaluated by Nuffic before it can be accepted. The only exception to this rule are diplomas from accredited higher education programmes in Flanders, Belgium, that can be found in the Higher Education Register: <https://www.highereducation.be/home>. The credential evaluation indicates the value of a foreign diploma or study programme in the Netherlands. Furthermore, Nuffic can assess the authenticity of foreign diplomas.

Information on how to apply for a credential evaluation and which documents are needed for the credential evaluation is available on the following website: <https://www.idw.nl/en/credential-evaluation.html> (please apply for a 'credential evaluation not for inburgering').

Your diploma does not have to be legalized by the authorities.

21. Do I have to show that I have sufficient means of existence when I apply for the orientation year?

No, you do not have to submit proof of your financial situation to be eligible for the orientation year. You will have to sustain yourself during the orientation year, but you do not have to show how you can or will do that.

During the orientation year you are not allowed to use public funds (like welfare benefits). However, you may request rent and/or healthcare allowances.

22. Am I eligible to apply for a second orientation year if I have completed another study or doctoral programme or if I have performed another scientific research?

Yes, to students completing various study or doctoral programmes or performing various scientific researches, a residence permit for the orientation year can be granted after each completed study programme or doctoral programme, or after each performed scientific research. You can therefore apply for another orientation year if you do that on the basis of another completed study or doctoral programme or another performed scientific research. This study programme, doctoral programme or scientific research must have been completed or performed after your previous orientation year.

23. Am I obliged to take out Dutch public health insurance once I have found a job or internship during the orientation year?

Yes, you are obliged to take out Dutch public health care insurance once you have found a job or when your internship allowance is €150 or more. If it is established that you are obliged to take out Dutch health insurance, you have three months to find one. Keep in mind: the start date of this insurance is the first day you became obliged to take out health insurance. In other words: the start date of your job or internship. You can find more information on the website [Zorgverzekeringslijn](https://www.zorgverzekeringslijn.nl).

24. Can my spouse, partner, and/or minor child stay with me during the orientation year?

Yes, that is possible. If your family members already have a Dutch residence permit, they can apply for a change of purpose of stay or for an extension of the validity of their residence permit. You do not have to show that you have sufficient means of existence to be able to support your family members in the Netherlands during the orientation year, but you and your family members are not allowed to use public funds, like welfare benefits. However, you are allowed to request rent and/or healthcare allowances.

If your family members do not have a Dutch residence permit yet, you will have to show that you have sufficient means of existence to be able to support your family members in the Netherlands during the orientation year. You have sufficient means of existence, if:

- Your income is independent, sufficient and long-term. You can find information about independent, sufficient and long-term income [here](#); or
- The balance of your bank account equals at least 12 times (or less, depending on how long your residence permit for the orientation year is still valid) the monthly amount of welfare benefits for families in the Netherlands, including holiday allowance. You can find information about welfare benefits [here](#).

Your family members will also have free access to the Dutch labour market during your orientation year, without restrictions.

If you still have specific questions regarding the orientation year, you can send your questions by email to: hemse@ind.minvenj.nl.