



Becoming a refugee during your studies

A Guide

ELPEEDA



Maastricht University

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Disclaimer

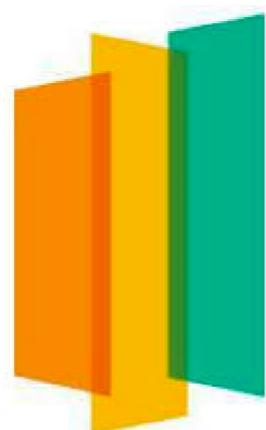
This informative booklet has been designed by and for students of Maastricht University (UM) in the framework of the honours program for Master students Premium. Elpeeda, a team of six motivated students has worked on the UM Student Service Center refugee project. Together with the central contact person for refugees at Maastricht University, they have addressed the challenges presented by the increasing student refugee crisis. Over the years increasingly more students at UM are losing their financial means and residency statuses which prevents them from following the course of their studies. They come on top of the already consequent student population struggling legally and financially because of conflicts and human rights abuses all around the world.

Thanks to the help of mentors and coaches, Elpeeda has conducted an impressive research work aiming at bridging all the students in need with the information and services they can benefit from. This booklet is meant as a tool to be used as a point of reference. We hope it will be put to good effect and pursue the mission envisioned by Elpeeda.

If you find yourself in the situation where you consider applying for asylum or taking any legal steps you should first contact the Central Contact Person for Refugees (see page 3).

Acknowledgments

This booklet would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Luc van der Akker, Dorothe Garé, our mentors Annick and Anna, our coach Petar Petrov, and the many organisations that enlightened us with their expertise : COA, Universitair Asiel Fonds and VluchtelingenWerk Nederland. We are extremely grateful for the support that Amnesty International Maastricht, Refugee Project Maastricht, The Innbetween, SSC, UM Newsletter, Feminist of Maastricht and D&I office brought us.



Introduction

Finding oneself in a difficult situation of having left one's country and seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country is a difficult, confusing and for many a lonely place. Maastricht University and the UM Student Service Center wish to support its current and prospective students who find themselves in this burdensome situation. This booklet created by the Elpeeda Team as part of Maastricht University's PREMIUM Excellence Program aims at addressing any issues or questions one might have while facing the asylum seeking procedure, in both the formal and informal sphere.

Central contact person

for refugees at Maastricht University

Hello, my name is Luc and I am the central contact person for refugees at Maastricht University when it comes to questions about the university, program offer and the admission process. In addition, I can help you with practical and financial issues and be your mediator for the UAF, municipality, COA and all other involved organisations. So, if you are about to go through the asylum seeker application procedure or you are considering it and feel lost, I would love to have a chat with you!

Contact via
refugee@maastrichtuniversity.nl



Luc van den Akker
central contact person for
refugees at UM

Step by Step - What to do?

If you are a student considering applying for asylum

You should contact the University and contact person for refugees at the SSC.

1

2

Contact one of the relevant organizations that help and advise students in your situation. Make sure you understand all the practicalities of the process!

Plan your budget! During the asylum seeker application process you will not be allowed to work, therefore it is important to get advice on how to deal with it.

3

4

Take care of your mental health! You can refer to UM Psychologists or support groups.

If you are afraid that your academic performance can be affected, contact Student Councilors and make sure to get advice.

5



The Official Procedure

The Dutch Asylum Procedure



more on organizations mentioned below in section "Getting help/support outside of university"

1 Step 1: Asylum application

It's the first step when you should go to the asylum application centre (in Dutch: "aanmeldcentrum") in Ter Apel if you are already in the Netherlands.

You will be first identified and registered by the police at those application centers, and then you will be asked to officially apply for asylum through filling in the asylum application form. You often have to hand in your passport for the time of the procedure and receive a W-document instead. You cannot get a W-doc in case you already have a residence permit (for study purposes) You should decide whether to keep the residence permit or contact the UM visa office and ask them to cancel the current document in order to receive a W-doc and financial support. During the process you will also be required to provide weekly proof that you are in the Netherlands. This is done by acquiring a weekly stamp in a refugee facility, you can apply to be administered to a facility closest to you.

[check ind.nl](https://ind.nl) for more information

2 Step 2: Medical Examination

This step involves tuberculosis (TB) examination and is done usually the next day of registration (if you are student with a residence permit you might present your previous results). Next, a medical intake is carried out by the Health Centre for Asylum Seekers (GZA). Asylum seekers from countries with a high risk of tuberculosis will be given a TB test by the Municipal Health Service (GGD) (COA, 2022).

3 Step 3: First Asylum Interview

You will be invited to the first asylum interview through which a staff member from the IND will have an interview with you based on the information you have provided in the asylum application form. The interview questions usually touch upon topics such as: identity, nationality, family, documents, education, work, residence in other countries, trip to the Netherlands, and the reasons behind asking asylum.

Note: if you come to the Netherlands through another European country via Visa or you have lived and registered there, you might not be invited to the first interview. In this case, you fall under the Dublin regulation which involves specific Dublin procedure and interviews that are different from the normal case.

4 Step 4: Rest and preparation period

It's the "rest and preparation" period where you will be waiting for your general asylum procedure. Usually you will be transferred to another Refugee Camp (AZC: asielzoekerscentrum) and you will be guided by the COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) in such camps as they are the hosting organisation. There is also a VWN office in each camp in the Netherlands that can support you through the asylum process. You can refer to the page about VWN (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland). Moreover, an arrangement with a lawyer is made during this period who can help you for your preparation for the asylum interviews.

5 Step 5: General asylum procedure, detailed interview/s

It is the start of the general asylum procedure as you will be invited for a detailed interview with the IND regarding your asylum case. The decision regarding asylum cases can be made within 6-9 days of this interview, but it usually takes longer.

6 Step 6: Final decision

It depends on the decision made in the last step. If you received a positive decision regarding your stay in the Netherlands, you will have the right to work immediately as you will be registered by the municipality of your allocated refugee camp. You will stay in the refugee camp until the municipality finds a home for you. You can ask for family reunification through a refugee organisation, for example, the VWN. You can also register yourself for the Takecarebnb organisation in such a case.

In case you receive a negative decision regarding your asylum, you have the chance to appeal to a Dutch court and this is usually discussed with your lawyer.



More information can be found in the following websites:

- Apply for asylum in the Netherlands, The IND
- Asylum procedure in the Netherlands, The VWN





registration

Asylum applications must be filed with the IND. The authorities carry out the identification and registration of each applicant. Medical tests must also be conducted.



Asylum seekers stay in a central reception center, where they are provided with accommodation, meals and necessary medical care.



registration interview

In the days after the interview, the IND will carry out the registration interview. An interpreter is present during the interview.



During this step, asylum seekers stay in a central reception center. The accommodation and counseling are the same as in the previous step.

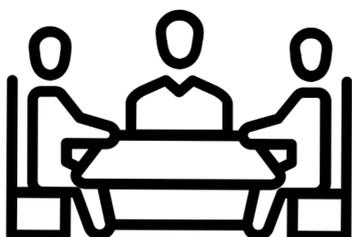


rest & preparation period

During this time the asylum seekers can prepare for interviews with IND. Mental and physical examination is carried out beforehand. Asylum seekers meet the lawyer designated to them.



Asylum seekers are provided accommodation in a COA process reception center. They are given allowance for food and access to medical care. Civic pre-integration starts.



general asylum procedure

Asylum seekers further motivate their application in interviews with the IND. An interpreter is present.



Asylum seekers stay at the COA process reception center as in the previous step.

decision

There are now 3 possibilities. The IND:

- grants a temporary residence permit
- needs more time for the decision; the applicant will then enter into the extended asylum procedure;
- rejects the asylum application.

From the IND's decision about the asylum application, the shelter, support and guidance are provided in a reception centre.

What if you don't apply for asylum?

It is recommended to apply for asylum once your situation becomes dangerous for you to go back to your country: the more you delay your asylum application, the more complex it becomes.

Moreover, some refugee students lost their scholarships from their home country or financing from their family members and thus faced huge financial burdens beside their need of protection. It's possible that some of the financial burdens become less intense after asking asylum as you will receive support and guidance from different refugee organisations within the Netherlands and the University of Maastricht based on your refugee documents.

However, the asylum process is challenging as it is uncertain and might extend to more than a year. It involves moving from a refugee camp to another around the Netherlands which will likely affect your studies. And if you managed to live somewhere outside the camp, a weekly stamping in the camp is mandatory for all refugees. This means there is a specific day and time of the week that all refugees have to go in person to the administration within the camp they were allocated to register their presence. Such stamping requires travelling, time, and extra money that is not provided as a support by the COA.

It is important to communicate about what you are facing during the asylum with the University as they can guide you about possible solutions to your situation, for example, the possibility to transfer to a nearby camp around Maastricht. There are many ways of support that the University can offer and you can find them through this booklet (Refer to the section for support).



Money matters



Money matters

Multiple economic difficulties can exist as a cause or consequence of one's legal and political situation. This booklet is also intending to offer an answer to them.

First, the go to place within UM stays the SSC refugee. The contact person Luc will help you navigate on a case to case basis through most of your options. Whether you are fluent in Dutch or not and depending on your legal situation, certain jobs at the university might be considered. Luc might also help you think about other job opportunities outside of the faculty. The most important is that you will get a sense of the different administrative routes for you to overcome this economic situation.

Next to this, certain funds at the university can be unlocked in certain conditions. Don't hesitate to reach out to the contact person to talk about it. You can expect to have some guidance about how to finance tuition fees, as well as your daily necessities. Some opportunities also exist outside of the university and Luc will be happy to guide you through them (UAF, COA, Vluchtelingenwerk etc.).



Well being

Well-being and mental support

Stressful situations can have a toll on someone's well-being. One person might feel lonely and want to get in touch with new people and/or people in a similar situation. Another person might need more professional help regarding their mental health. Therefore, this part of the booklet is dedicated to letting you know about the different tools and services devoted to supporting your mental health and well-being.

I need professional mental health care

University of Maastricht offers five free sessions with UM psychologists. You can get in contact with a UM psychologist through a study advisor. Otherwise, you can make an appointment by signing up for a quick psychological referral through an online appointment software.

If you are an asylum seeker and are registered in an AZC you have the right to get professional help through the GZA. GZA is the healthcare institute for refugees in the Netherlands and is located in every refugee camp in the Netherlands. Through the GZA you can make an appointment with a psychologist and the professional help you need.

As an international student at UM you might have Dutch insurance or an international insurance, always check your policy first! You can get professional mental health care through your dutch GP. They will refer you to the GGZ employee for an intake and follow up consultations.

In case of life threatening emergencies, call 112. If you need immediate psychological help you can contact the following institutes:

1. Your own GP
2. GP Medical post (in dutch: Huisartsenpost) – This is the first-line healthcare outside of working hours
3. Suicide prevention hotline: 113
4. Sexual Assault Center website or phone number 0800-0188
5. Victim support NL (“slachtofferhulp”)
<https://www.slachtofferhulp.nl/english/>
6. Domestic violence or abuse (“veiligthuis”) <https://veiligthuis.nl>
7. Police

Supporting activities – what can I do to protect my wellbeing?

Are you looking for online programmes/coaching to improve your wellbeing or mental health?



Caring Universities UM

Caring Universities offers free online programmes to help improve student's mental health. All programmes are evidence-based, created by clinical psychologists, and include online coaching. The topics vary and include combating procrastination, understanding stress and learning how to deal with it, improving your mood, tackling your sleep problems, etc.

SCAN ME



Developing your competencies UM

Free lectures, workshops and training courses covering a variety of topics are offered. From fear of failure, mindfulness meditation, creativity and resilience to networking skills, time management and a range of training on job applications.

SCAN ME



Wellbeing Movement UM

The Wellbeing Movement (WBM) is an initiative promoting physical and mental wellbeing at UM. They have different initiatives such as the Wellbeing Week, which is a week of free events with workshops, talks and other student-centred activities. There is also the Wellbeing Wednesdays, in which one Wednesday every month is dedicated to wellbeing and focused activities are organised on different related topic. They also have the Wellbeing Series which is a series of short courses of weekly workshops and can include yoga or dance. We recommend you take a look at their website because the activities vary.

SCAN ME





Are you looking for someone to talk to?

@ease

At @ease you can talk with two volunteers by walking in or chatting online. It is anonymous, free and you do not need an appointment. They help young people from 12 to 25 years old.

SCAN ME



Peer Support UM

Do you not feel a part of a community yet as a UM student? Are you sometimes feeling lonely and would like to grab a coffee with a fellow student? Or chat or take a walk? Do you find it hard to navigate your way through Maastricht, the University or your faculty and would like someone to show you around? Then send an email to peersupport@maastrichtuniversity.nl. They will help you further and arrange contact with a peer supporter.

SCAN ME



Are you looking for a home away from home?

The InnBetween

The InnBetween strives to be a second home for students in Maastricht. A place to eat, study, meet, be together, play games, and share your life. The InnBetween aims to be an open-minded community that brings people from different backgrounds together.

SCAN ME



Refugee Project

The Refugee Project Maastricht is a volunteer-run organisation that aims at connecting people from different cultures and backgrounds on a level where they can meet and become friends.

SCAN ME





Your studies

Student Deans and Student Counselors/Advisors

Important note: always keep your student advisor updated with your current situation as they can help you with study related issues and provide support and deadline extensions if needed.

Student Deans

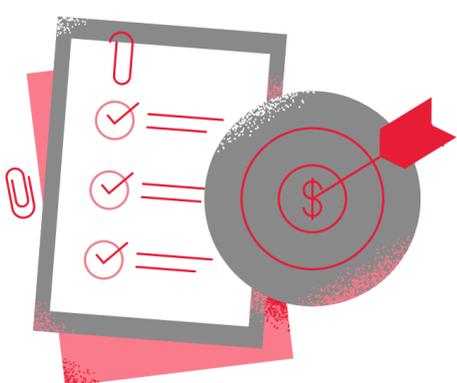
Students can call upon the UM Student Deans for information and advice on their legal position as a student. The UM Student Deans work throughout the entire university and are independent. They will be glad to help you find a solution. Naturally, all the information you share with a UM Student Dean will be treated confidentially.

Student Advisors

Students at Maastricht University can consult a study adviser to discuss their personal development and plans for the future. Do you want to get the most as possible out of your study? Do you wonder how you can bring your study and extracurricular activities more in line with your goals? Together with a study adviser you can examine how you can develop your talents and skills further.

Each faculty has its own student advisors!

The study adviser is well-informed about the possibilities within your study and faculty. He or she will help you determine you how you can shape your study to your advantage. The study adviser will coach you and help you to make good choices. For example, you will make a study plan together. He or she might also refer you to somebody else who can help you progress even further. This could be a UM Student Dean, Disability Support, Career Services or a UM Psychologist.



check this website
to find out more
about student
advisors at your
faculty!



Getting help/support
outside of university

Support outside of UM

Here are the different organisations that can support and help you as a student who becomes a refugee. Most of them will be of great help if you want to apply for asylum in the Netherlands.

UAF

The UAF provides financial, social, and academic support to refugees and asylum seekers willing to pursue their education or to find a job.

More precisely, this is what the UAF can offer you:

- 1) Financial support: the UAF can provide grants and loans to cover costs related to your studies such as tuition fees, language courses, books, or a computer.
- 2) Guidance and advice: the UAF can both advise you on your choice of study and help you to learn Dutch language. Moreover, the UAF organises training courses as well as networking meetings for student refugees and for those who have graduated.

To be considered eligible, you must meet the following criteria:

- You have a Dutch residence permit because you applied for asylum
- You received your residence permit less than five years ago
- You are following a Dutch language course (level B1)
- You attended school in your country of origin and have completed at least 12 years of formal education or your level of education is comparable to the Dutch havo 5 level

Here is how you can contact the UAF:

Address: Newtonlaan 71, 3584 BP in Utrecht

Telephone: +31 30 252 0835

Email: info@uaf.nl

SCAN ME



Want to know more? You can also check the UAF website

COA

The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) supports and guides asylum seekers in the Netherlands. If you are a student who becomes a refugee during your studies and if you think about applying for asylum in the Netherlands, the organisation can also provide you with accommodation in their reception centre.

Do you need advice? Here is how you can reach out to the COA:

Address: François de Veyestraat 4, 6221 AB Maastricht

Phone: +31 88 715 1000

Email: azcmaastricht@coa.nl

More information can be found [here](#)

Vluchtelingenwerk

Also known as the Council for Refugees, this organisation provides guidance to all refugees. Indeed, the Vluchtelingenwerk can guide you through your asylum procedure, housing, integration, language, and work.

The Vluchtelingenwerk has two locations in Maastricht and here is how you can get in touch with the organisation (by appointments only):

Address: François de Veijestraat 4-6 6221 AB, Maastricht

Phone: +31 43 311 0616

Email: azcmaastricht@vluchtelingenwerk.nl

Address: Hertogsingel 98-100, 6214 AG, Maastricht

Phone: +31 43 321 1386

Email maastricht@vluchtelingenwerk.nl

If you need further information, you can also check their website <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/>

Quick contact list



Who?	Role	Contact details
Luc van den Akker	Contact person UM for refugees and coordinator international service desk	refugee@maastrichtuniversity.nl
COA	Central Agency for Reception of Asylum Seekers, and therefore run every AZC. They regulate the placement and administration for asylum seekers in the Netherlands.	
Vluchtelingen Werk	Helps refugees with legal advice. Found in every AZC.	
Student advisor	Helps UM students with administrative and personal matters through counselling. Every faculty of UM has student advisors.	
Refugee Talent Hub	Helps refugees in the Netherlands to find jobs	
Refugee Project	Creates awareness on refugee crisis and organises events to bring everyone together	
Student Services Centre	Helps students with a wide range of issues related to studying and student life.	

@ease	Helps young people age 12-25 who want to talk with someone about anything.	
The Innbetween	The InnBetween strives to be a second home for students in Maastricht.	
GZA Maastricht	GZA (Asylum Seeker Healthcare) gives asylum seekers the healthcare they need.	
UAF	Supports refugees with their studies and work.	
GP Medical Post ("Huisartsenpost")	Provides urgent GP care outside regular consultation hours: every day between 5:00 PM and 8:00 AM, throughout the weekend, and on all recognized public holidays.	
Take Care BnB	An organisation that matches refugees with a host Dutch family.	



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