

Orientation year

Knowledge Centre for International Staff

Orientation year

The purpose of the orientation year/search year is to offer international talent an opportunity to start working as a highly skilled migrant or, for example, to start their own business. In addition to graduates in the Netherlands or graduates studying at a world-class university abroad, the scheme can also be used by researchers. A further plus is that, under certain conditions, the orientation year may be applied for not once, but multiple times.

People may work without having to apply for an additional work permit (TWV) during the orientation year and are permitted to do all kind of work (or internships).

The IND fees for the orientation year can be found [here](#) (under: Looking for a job after study, promotion or scientific research) and will need to be paid by the applicant.

Eligibility

You are eligible for a residence permit based on an orientation year if, within 3 years prior to the application:

- you have completed an [accredited Bachelor's or Master's programme](#) in the Netherlands; or
- you have completed a post-doctoral programme or have obtained a PhD in the Netherlands; or
- you have had a residence permit for the purpose of scientific research in the Netherlands, or a residence permit for the purpose of working as a highly skilled migrant to undertake scientific research in the Netherlands; or
- you have obtained a Master's degree on the basis of an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course; or
- you have completed a study in relation to the Cultural Policy Act; or
- you have completed a study that is provided in relation to the development and cooperation policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; or
- you have completed a higher education programme designated by ministerial order; or
- you have completed a Master's or post-doctoral programme or have obtained a PhD at a designated international educational institution¹ abroad.

¹ A designated international educational institution is listed in the top 200 of one of the available general ranking lists or in the top 200 of one of the ranking lists by faculty or by subject field of the:

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

Terms and conditions

- With an orientation year residence permit, you have free access to the Dutch labour market. An additional work permit (TWV) is not needed; you can take up any paid or unpaid employment/internship.
- While holding the residence permit, you are **not** entitled to receive any state benefits; if you do, your permit may be revoked.
- Your residence permit cannot be extended based on the orientation year. This means that, if you find a job that complies with the income requirement, you must apply for a change of purpose. If this is not the case, you must leave the country as soon as possible.
- In spite of the above, it is possible to apply for multiple orientation years. Each time a graduate obtains a new degree or a researcher has completed new research, they may again apply for an orientation year.

Application

KCIS can assist you in the process of obtaining an orientation year. Please note however, that this is a personal application in which Maastricht University cannot act as your 'recognised sponsor'. More practical information can be found below. You can also visit the [IND website](#) for more information on the application procedure.

After the orientation year

In order to be eligible for a 'highly skilled migrant' permit after/during the orientation year, you are required to find a job that complies with [the reduced salary criterion 'highly skilled migrant after job-seeking year for highly skilled migrants'](#).

If you find a job that does not meet the salary criterion, your employer will have to apply for a single permit for residence and employment on your behalf.

If you chose to start your own business, you must change your residence permit to employment as a 'self-employed person' or 'start-up'.

Practical info:

- The residence permit orientation year for highly educated persons can be submitted within 3 years after completing the studies, or after obtaining the PhD.
- Those who graduated in the Netherlands are entitled to first return to their country of origin after having completed their studies, and can then come back to the Netherlands on the basis of the orientation year.
- The employment status on the residence permit for the orientation year for highly educated person states that work is allowed without restrictions, a work permit (TWV) is not required.
- Scientific researchers may also apply for a residence permit orientation year for highly educated persons.
- To avoid a residence gap, you will have to submit the application for the orientation year before your current residence permit expires.
- The application can be submitted either by post or at the front desk of the IND office or Expat Center.
- [Link to application form](#)

After the orientation year

- If you find a job as a 'highly skilled migrant' your residence permit needs to be changed accordingly. Please note that you need to comply with the (reduced) salary criterion for highly skilled migrant. Your employer will be responsible for the application of the new residence permit.

- If you find another job (not as 'highly skilled migrant') which will not need to meet the salary criterion, your employer will need to apply for a single permit for residence and employment (GVVA) on your behalf.
- If you chose to start your own business, you must change your residence permit to employment as a 'self-employed person' or 'start up'.
- If you have not succeeded in finding a job, you have to leave the Netherlands.