

# National factsheet University Colleges

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# National factsheet University Colleges

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## ROA Factsheet

ROA-F-2023/8E

Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt | ROA  
*Research Centre For Education and the Labour Market | ROA*

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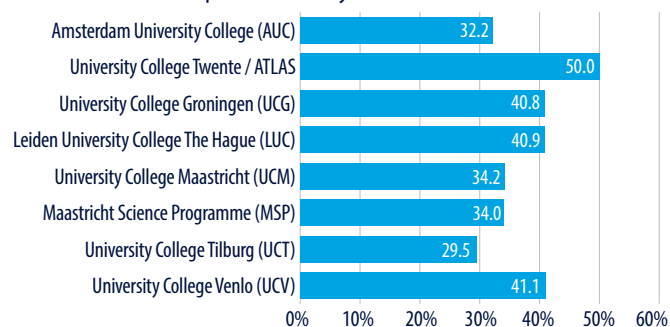
## About the factsheet

The Dutch University Colleges aim to gain systematic insights into their alumni's experiences during and after their studies as well as into their current labour market status. For this purpose, the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) has carried out a graduate survey among the Dutch University Colleges alumni.<sup>1</sup> The survey covers graduates from both University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes (UC/LAP).

The alumni survey was carried out in 2023 and was disseminated among all graduates of the 2004/2005 – 2022/2023 graduation cohorts of eight University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes. This factsheet contains the survey results for the alumni of all the participating institutes. In Figure 1, we provide an overview of the response rates by UC/LAP. Across the institutes, there is an average response rate of 37.8% with University College Twente/ATLAS having the highest response rate (50.0%) and University College Tilburg the lowest (29.5%). In total, 2,917 alumni responded to the survey.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 1**

Overview of the response rates by UC/LAP



Source: Alumni Survey (AUC: N=765; ATLAS: N=90; UCG: N=87; LUC: N=650; UCM: N=878; MSP: N=240; UCT: N=161; UCV: N=46).

When we refer to the share of alumni in the remainder of this factsheet, we mean the share of graduates of all participating University Colleges/Liberal Arts Programmes who answered the question. A similar survey has been carried

out in 2017, which covered the graduation cohorts of 2005-2017. The current survey addresses the same questions, but covers a broader population and can therefore not be readily compared to the previous wave. The response rate is skewed: in general, the more recent graduation cohorts are better represented in the survey responses.

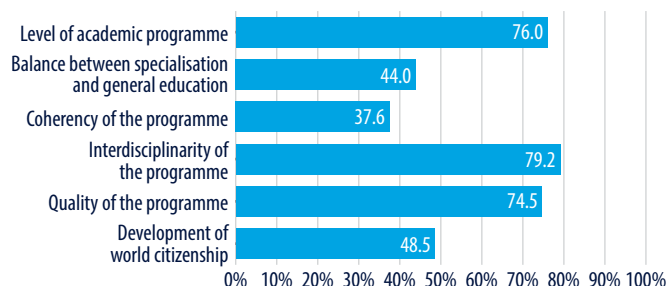
In this national factsheet, we cover the following topics for the alumni of all eight University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes taken together: (1) their experiences during their UC programme; (2) their further studies, and (3) their current situation with regards to education and their labour market situation.

## The programme

The large majority of UC/LAP graduates is very satisfied with their study programme choice. More than four out of five alumni (84.9%) would choose to follow the same programme again at the same institute. Furthermore, 3.6% of the alumni would follow the same UC/LAP programme, but at a different institute. The survey shows that 10.8% of the UC/LAP graduates would choose another programme if they could choose again: 3.3% would pursue it at the same institute they graduated from whereas 7.5% would choose a different institute. Less than 1% would, in retrospect, not have chosen to study at all.

**FIGURE 2**

Evaluation of specific aspects of the UC/LAP programme, percentages scoring 'good'.



Source: Alumni Survey (Academic level: N=2,021; Balance: N=2,020; Coherence: N=2,018; Interdisciplinarity: N=2,014; Quality: N=2,012; World citizenship: N=2,003). The items were measured on a four-point Likert scale and included the categories 'insufficient', 'weak', 'sufficient', and 'good'.

1 University College Maastricht, Maastricht Science Programme, University College Venlo, Amsterdam University College, Leiden University College, University College Groningen, University College Twente (ATLAS), and University College Tilburg.

2 It is important to note that not all 2,917 respondents completed the survey. Out of these alumni, 906 respondents ended the survey before reaching the final question.

Figure 2 shows how graduates evaluate five specific aspects of their UC/LAP programme. For each aspect, we report the percentage of alumni that evaluates it as 'good'. The most valued dimension among alumni is the interdisciplinarity of their programme: almost four in five alumni considers this aspect as 'good'. Next, the academic level and the quality of the programme are also appreciated by a large majority of the alumni (with 76.0% and 74.5% respectively scoring it 'good'). The aspects of the development of world citizenship on the one hand and the balance between specialisation and general education on the other are rated as 'good' by 48.5% and 44.0% of the alumni respectively. Lastly, the least valued aspect is the coherency of the programme with 37.6% of the UC/LAP alumni giving it a 'good' score.

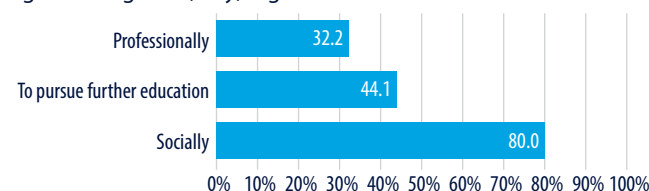
Extra-curricular activities are a common way for UC/LAP graduates to acquire experience during their studies. With 68.9%, volunteering in a student organisation or other voluntary groups is the most commonly reported activity, followed by gaining work experience that is not related to their studies with 61.7%. Education abroad was mentioned by 45.6% of alumni and gaining experience through internships by 42.5%. The least commonly reported extra-curricular activities were work experience related to their study (22.9%), writing the thesis outside of university (9.1%) and starting their own business (4.5%).

Studying at a UC/LAP can provide alumni with the opportunity to build a valuable (academic) network. The majority of the graduates (67.5%) indicates to have established such a network during their studies. In Figure 3, we show what benefits those 'networkers' experienced from it. The figure shows that alumni profited especially socially from the network with four in five reporting to have benefited to a (very) high extent socially. Whereas 44.1% indicated to have benefited to a (very) high extent from their UC/LAP network to pursue further education, only 32.2% of alumni reported (very) large professional benefits from the network.

Alumni can also provide their UC/LAP with a valuable network. The large majority of the graduates (90.0%) is willing to contribute in some way or the other to their UC/LAP. Examples of contributions include giving a guest lecture, informing prospective students on the UC/LAP programme and life after graduation or organising a workplace visit at their company.

**FIGURE 3**

Benefits from the network established at their UC/LAP, percentages scoring 'to a (very) high extent'



Source: Alumni Survey (Professionally: N=1,700; Further education: N=1,675; Socially: N=1,743)

Note: More than three out of five (67.5%) alumni indicated that they established a valuable network during their study period at their UC/LAP. These alumni were asked how they benefitted from their network. Respondents could choose multiple answers. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'Not at all' to 'To a very high extent'.

## Further study

The degrees conferred by University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes are of bachelor level, and the survey shows that 89.8% of the alumni continue to pursue further education. In Figure 4, we take a closer look at the highest level of education chosen by these graduates. With 78.2% of the alumni pursuing a master level qualification, it is the most commonly reported highest track. The second most common level of highest pursued education is PhD level education (17.9%). Other levels of education are much less common with between 0.7% and 1.7% of the alumni reporting pre-Masters, Bachelors and Other levels as their highest level of further education. Interesting to mention is that among those who continued with a Master's degree, about 44.9% enrolled into a Master programme at a top 100 university.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Based on the [World University Rankings 2024](#).

<sup>4</sup> Looking into the top 50 and top 25 universities, these percentages respectively yield 15.8% and 6.7%.

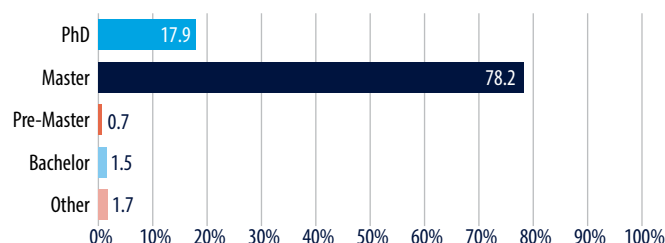
<sup>5</sup> In the factsheet that is based on the results from the graduate survey conducted in 2017, we reported the percentage of alumni who obtained a Master's degree from a top 100 university. Unfortunately, the last graduate survey only measures whether alumni enrolled into a Master's programme at a top 100 university.

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Utrecht University does not appear in the [2024 ranking](#) as they decided to not participate in the ranking any longer. Assuming that Utrecht University would be present in the top 100 university ranking, the percentage of alumni who enrolled into a Master's programme at a top university would increase to 51.3%.

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**FIGURE 4**

Distribution of highest level of further educational tracks of graduates from UC/LAP



Source: Alumni Survey (N=2,254)

Looking at the composition of the population at the University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes, the survey shows that it is very international: about half of the alumni (49.6%) does not have a Dutch nationality. A considerable share of those alumni, i.e. 38.1%, enrolls in a Master's programme in the Netherlands after graduation.

**TABLE 1**

Top ten fields of study of further education of UC/LAP graduates in percentages

|    |                         |      |
|----|-------------------------|------|
| 1  | Law                     | 7.1% |
| 2  | Political Science       | 6.1% |
| 3  | International Relations | 5.8% |
| 3  | Psychology              | 5.5% |
| 5  | Life Science            | 4.9% |
| 6  | Neuroscience            | 3.7% |
| 7  | Environmental Science   | 3.6% |
| 8  | Business Economics      | 3.4% |
| 9  | Computer Science/ICT    | 3.4% |
| 10 | Economics               | 3.1% |

Source: Alumni Survey (N=3,259 multiple answers per respondent possible)

The survey also allows us to get a better understanding of the fields of study for further education of the UC/LAP graduates. In Table 1, we show the top ten fields of study of the programmes that the respondents are currently enrolled in or graduated from after obtaining their degree from a UC/LAP.<sup>7</sup> Since students were allowed to fill in a maximum of three follow-up study programmes, the percentages in Table 1 are based on more cases than the number of students participating in the alumni survey. Law takes the number one spot with 7.1% of the graduates

reporting it as field of further study. Political Science (6.1%), International Relations (5.8%), Psychology (5.5%), and Life Science (4.9%) complete the top 5. From the table it is clear that UC/LAP graduates pursue a wide range of educational fields. At the bottom of the top 10 list of chosen fields of study are Neuroscience, Environmental Science, Business Economics, Computer Science/ICT and Economics.

Taking a closer look at the process of accessing and succeeding in further education, the survey also measures alumni's satisfaction with the help provided by their University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes. The results show that 30.2% of the alumni is to a (very) high extent satisfied with the help provided by their institute in finding suitable further education. However, more than four in five graduates (85.9%) perceive their UC/LAP programme to be helpful to a (very) high extent to succeed in further studies. This implies that the University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes seem to prepare students more for the actual follow-up degree than for the process of finding a suitable programme of further education.

Continuing on the topic of applying for further education, the survey demonstrates that about four in five (80.8%) of the UC/LAP alumni did not face any additional requirements for their follow-up study.<sup>8</sup> Still, 27.7% of the graduates have applied for a study programme without being accepted. Of this group, about one in five alumni (20.4%) indicated that there were no reasons given as to why they were rejected. The most commonly reported reason, in case they were provided, was missing courses (28.6%). Of those alumni who were rejected for a follow-up study, the majority (83.0%) chose another educational programme, 2.6% decided to follow the required courses, and 14.4% choose not to continue to study.

## Current situation: continued education and employment situation

Based on the survey, we can gain a better insight into the current activities and pursuits of UC/LAP graduates. At the time of the survey, 18.6% of the alumni were still studying. Of those alumni who entered the labour market, only 6.3% were unemployed, whereas 93.7% were working.<sup>9</sup>

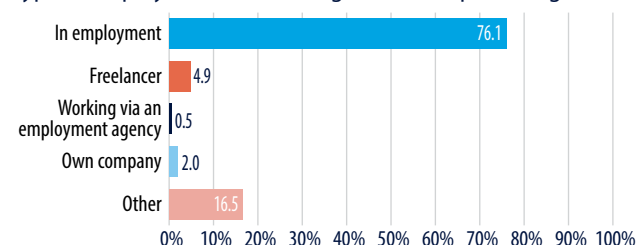
<sup>7</sup> Of all indicated enrolled programmes, the 'Other' category was filled out by about 31.4% of the alumni.

<sup>8</sup> This indicator only measures the requirements needed for the first of a maximum of three follow-up studies in the survey.

<sup>9</sup> Being part of the labour force means currently looking for a job or working for at least 1 hour per week, students excluded.

**FIGURE 5**

Type of employment of UC/LAP graduates in percentages



Source: Alumni Survey (N=1,638)

Note: The figure only includes alumni who entered the labour market and are employed.

In Figure 5, we provide an overview of the employment type of working UC/LAP graduates at the time of the survey. The large majority, 76.1%, works for an employer. Other types of employment are far less common: the share of freelancers yields 4.9%, whereas 2.0% of the employed graduates has their own company. Less than 1% of the employed graduates is working for an employment agency. The remaining 16.5% of these graduates are classified as 'Other', which could for example mean that they are working in the context of a PhD contract or working during a gap year.

**TABLE 2**

Top 5 fields of work for UC/LAP graduates who are currently employed, in percentages

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| <b>Research occupation</b><br>(e.g. researcher, medical laboratory technician, medical analyst)                          | 20.4% |
| <b>Advisory occupation</b><br>(e.g. Human Resources employee, lawyer, legal service provider, staff member)              | 15.3% |
| <b>Financial/business occupation</b><br>(e.g. bank employee, financial specialist, business consultant)                  | 8.7%  |
| <b>Management occupation</b><br>(e.g. manager/director)  | 8.4%  |
| <b>Commercial occupation</b><br>(e.g. sales employee, commercial agent, public affairs consultant, marketing specialist) | 7.8%  |

Source: Alumni Survey (N=1,636)

Table 2 provides an overview of the five most commonly reported fields of work for employed UC/LAP graduates. With one in five of those alumni indicating to be employed in a Research occupation, it is the most commonly reported field. Advisory occupations take the second place with 15.3%, followed by Financial/business occupations with 8.7%. The top 5 is completed by Management occupations (8.4%) and Commercial occupations (7.8%).

**TABLE 3**

Top five of countries graduates are working in

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Netherlands    | 52.0% |
| Germany        | 12.7% |
| United Kingdom | 7.4%  |
| Belgium        | 4.0%  |
| United States  | 2.9%  |

Source: Alumni Survey (N=1,819)

The survey also allows us to gain a better understanding of where the UC/LAP alumni end up working. As can be seen in Table 3, more than half of the employed graduates (52.0%) works in the Netherlands at the time of the survey. Neighbouring countries rank high in the top five, with Germany attracting 12.7% of the employed alumni, the United Kingdom scoring 7.4%, and 4.0% of the alumni work in Belgium. The last place for this top 5 goes to the United States with 2.9%.

One in five (20.7%) of the graduates working in the Netherlands does not have a Dutch nationality. This implies that after finishing their studies, there is not only a significant share of people who stay in the Netherlands for further education, but a considerable group also remains for work.

Figure 6 illustrates the gross monthly income of UC/LAP alumni.<sup>10</sup> The income is measured in categories. For the sake of clarity, the categories above 4,000 euros a month are grouped together. The figure consists of two groups, namely those alumni who graduated from a UC/LAP within the last four years and those who graduated longer ago. As time since graduation is strongly related to gross monthly income, this distinction is essential. The figure shows that almost three in ten alumni (28.0%) who graduated in the last four years earns less than 2,000 euros gross a month. This share is considerably smaller for those who graduated at least 5 years ago with 6.1%.<sup>11</sup> Of the alumni who graduated between zero and four years ago, 33.1% earns between 2,000 and 3,000 euros a month. Looking at those alumni who graduated at least five years ago, we observe that more than half of them earns more than 4,000 euros per month. Furthermore, almost a quarter of this group (24.0%) earns between 3,000 and 4,000 euros a month. The observation

<sup>10</sup> The income is only calculated for respondents belonging to the work-force. By doing this, we exclude students with side-jobs.

<sup>11</sup> Of those alumni who graduated up to four years ago, 75.5% of those who earn less than 2,000 euro per month work less than 30 hours per week. For those who graduated at least five years ago this share yields 40.5%.

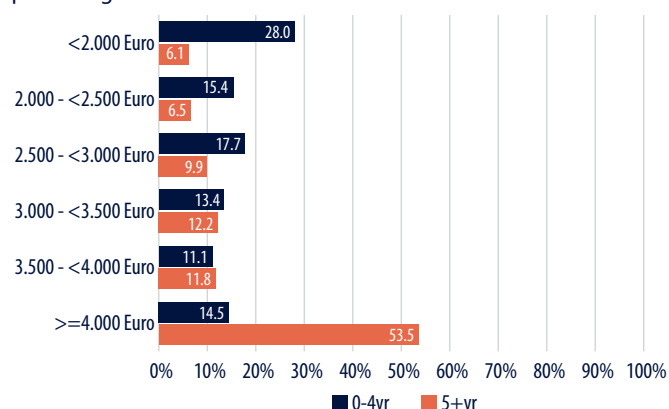


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that higher gross monthly incomes are related to more time since graduation is in line with the expectations.

**FIGURE 6**

Gross monthly incomes of UC/LAP alumni, separately for those who graduated up to four and more than five years ago, in percentages



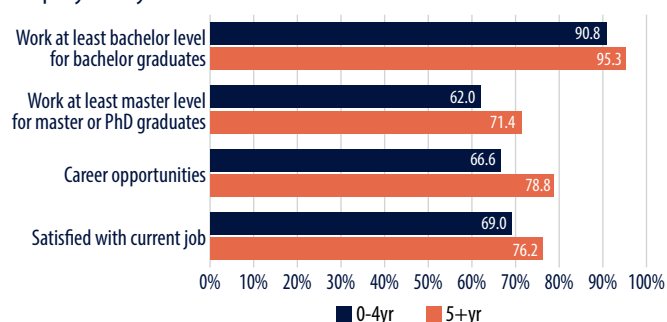
Source: Alumni Survey (N= 2,561)

Having a job does not necessarily imply that it matches individual preferences and qualifications. That is why, in Figure 7, we show an overview of employability indicators for UC/LAP graduates. We once again compare those who graduated between 0-4 years ago and those who graduated at least 5 years ago. We examine whether there is a so-called 'vertical mismatch'. This measure captures whether alumni work in a job that requires at least their highest obtained degree or a lower degree. Hence, we compare the minimum level that is required for their job and their own highest degree. A distinction is made between those who hold a Bachelor's degree and those with a Master's degree or higher.<sup>12</sup> As can be seen in the figure, it is clear that the large majority of the UC/LAP alumni works at least at the bachelor level (90.8% for more recent graduates and 95.3% for those who graduated at least 5 years ago). For those alumni with at least a Master's degree, the majority works in a job requiring at least a Master or PhD level. This share is larger for those who graduated at least five years ago (71.4% compared to 62.0% for those who graduated between 0-4 years ago). Concerning career opportunities, we again see this difference between the two graduation cohorts: while 78.8% of the graduates who graduated at least 5 years ago reports to have (very)

many career opportunities, the share is 66.6% for the more recent graduates. This last group also reports less often to be (very) satisfied with their job, with 69.0% compared to 76.2% of those who graduated at least 5 years ago.

**FIGURE 7**

Employability indicators of alumni of UC/LAP



Source: Alumni Survey (bachelor: N=1,386; master: N=1,350; career opportunities: N=1,751; satisfaction: N=1,754). The first two bars only contain respondents whose highest degree is a Bachelor's degree, the second two bars only contain respondents whose highest degree is a Master's or PhD degree.

## Conclusion

In this factsheet, we offer insights into the experiences of alumni of eight University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes in the Netherlands using the University College Alumni survey. We discussed how the graduates experience the programme they graduated from, their further studies and their current career situation.

Firstly, we show that overall; alumni are very satisfied with their choice for their UC/LAP education. More than four in five graduates (84.9%) would choose to do the same programme at the same institute if they had to choose again. Furthermore, alumni especially value the academic level of their programme, its interdisciplinarity and quality. Of the UC/LAP graduates, 67.5% indicated to have built a valuable (academic) network during their studies and many participated in extra-curricular activities. There is also a large willingness to contribute to their University College or Liberal Arts Programme among alumni, 90.0% is willing to do so in one way or another.

Secondly, we also delved deeper into the further education of UC/LAP alumni. The survey showed that the large

<sup>12</sup> Again, we only include those alumni who are part of the working workforce.

majority of graduates (89.8%) pursues further education in a wide variety of fields. Almost half of the alumni do not have a Dutch nationality and 38.1% of them enrolls in a Master's programme in the Netherlands after graduation. We also find that, despite the fact that more than four in five graduates (85.9%) perceives their UC/LAP programme to be helpful to a (very) high extent to succeed in further studies, only 30.2% of them is satisfied to a (very) high extent with the help provided by their institute in finding suitable further education.

Lastly, we discuss the current activities and pursuits of the graduates. We show that at the time of the survey, 18.6% of alumni was still studying. Of those who entered the labour market, 93.7% was employed, and mostly for an employer rather than for example being self-employed. The most commonly mentioned field of work by those working was Research occupations with a share of 20.4%. Furthermore, a little over half of the alumni was working in the Netherlands, and one in five of those did not have a Dutch nationality. Concerning the gross monthly income of UC/LPM alumni, we find, as expected, that more time since graduation is related to higher monthly income. For example, whereas 53.5% of alumni who graduated five or more years ago reported to earn more than 4,000 euro gross a month, only 14.5% among those who graduated between zero and 4 years ago did. The survey furthermore shows that the majority of alumni are (very) satisfied with their current job and career opportunities.



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