Maastricht Science Programme (MSP), University College Maastricht (UCM) and University College Venlo (UCV)

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ROA Factsheet

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Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt | ROA
Research Centre For Education and the Labour Market | ROA
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. 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 the Maastricht School of Liberal Arts and Sciences (MSLAS), consisting of three colleges: University College Maastricht (UCM), Maastricht Science Programme (MSP), and University College Venlo (UCV). In Figure 1, we provide an overview of the response rates by programme. The average response rate over all three programmes is 34.4%. In total, 1,164 alumni participated (240 from MSP, 46 from UCV and 878 from UCM).

When we refer to the share of alumni in the remainder of this factsheet, we mean the share of MSLAS graduates 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 factsheet, we cover the following topics for the alumni of MSP, UCV and UCM 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 graduates from the MSLAS programme is very satisfied with their programme choice: more than four out of five alumni (87.5%) would, in retrospect, choose the same programme at the same institute again. About 2.7% would choose to do the same programme, but at a different institute. Furthermore, a little more than 9% of alumni would pick a different programme if they had to choose again, either at the same institute (3.3%) or at a different institute (5.8%). Lastly, less than 1% would opt in retrospect to not study at all.

In Figure 2, we show how alumni value different aspects of their MSLAS programme. For each aspect, we report the percentage of alumni that evaluates it as ‘good’. Both the interdisciplinary nature and the quality of the programme received a ‘good’ score by more than 80% of graduates (84.8% and 81.1% respectively). The level of the academic programme is highly regarded too, with 79.5% of graduates considering it to be good. The development of world citizenship also received a ‘good’ score (53.8%).

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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 1,164 respondents completed the survey. Out of these alumni, 352 respondents ended the survey before reaching the final question.
citizenship is the fourth most valued aspect of the MSLAS programme (with 53.8% of alumni rating it as ‘good’). Both the aspects of balance between specialisation and general education on the one hand and the coherency of the programme on the other were given a ‘good’ score by less than half of the alumni (47.4% and 43.2% respectively).

Many MSLAS graduates participate in extracurricular activities to gain experience while studying. Volunteering in a student organisation or other voluntary groups and education abroad are the most commonly reported types of activities with 60.1% and 57.9% respectively. Work experience that is unrelated to their study comes in a close third place with 56.8% of alumni reporting it as an extracurricular activity. A share of 32.4% reports to have participated in an internship. Furthermore, about one in five alumni (20.3%) has gained experience related to their study during their time at the MSLAS. Writing a thesis outside university (11.4%) and starting an own business (3.6%) are the least commonly reported types of extracurricular activities.

**FIGURE 3**
Benefits from the network established at the MSLAS, percentages scoring ‘to a (very) high extent’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionally</th>
<th>To pursue further education</th>
<th>Socially</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: UC Alumni Survey (Professionally: N=636; Further education: N=624; Socially: N=653).*

*Note: More than three out of five (63.2%) alumni indicated that they established a valuable network during their study period at the MSLAS. 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’.

Studying at a UC/LAP can provide alumni with the opportunity to build a valuable (academic) network. More than three in five alumni (63.2%) indicates to have established such a network during their time at the MSP, UCV or UCM. In Figure 3, we show what benefits those ‘networkers’ experienced from that network. More than four in five alumni (81.9%) indicated that they benefited socially from the network to a (very) high extent. Whereas 45.3% reported to have benefited to a (very) high extent from their MSLAS network to pursue further education, only 35.2% of alumni reported (very) large professional benefits from it.

Alumni can also provide the MSLAS with a valuable network. About nine in ten graduates (90.3%) is willing to contribute to their programme in one way or another. Examples of contributions include giving a guest lecture, informing prospective students on the MSLAS programme and life after graduation or organising a workplace visit at their company.

**Further study**

The degrees conferred by University Colleges and Liberal Arts Programmes are of bachelor level, and the survey shows that more than nine in ten alumni (91.3%) continue to pursue further education. Figure 4 provides an overview of the distribution of the highest level of education that MSLAS graduates enrolled into. The large majority (74.4%) enrolled into a master level programme as highest chosen track. Furthermore, a little over one in five alumni (22.5%) reported that a PhD level track as their highest pursued track. Other levels of education are much less common with between 0.2% and 2.1% of the MSLAS graduates reporting pre-Masters, Bachelors and Other levels as their highest level of further education. Among those who continued with a Master’s degree, about 38.0% enrolled into a Master programme at a top 100 university.

3 Based on the [World University Rankings 2024](https://worlduniversityrankings.com/rankings/university-rankings/
4 Looking into the top 50 and top 25 universities, these percentages respectively yield 15.9% and 6.4%.
5 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.
6 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 44.0%.
Maastricht Science Programme (MSP), University College Maastricht (UCM) and University College Venlo (UCV)

FIGURE 4
Distribution of highest level of further educational tracks of MSLAS graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Master</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UC Alumni Survey (N= 918)

The survey shows that graduates from MSP, UCV and UCM are very international, as more than three out of five graduates (64.0%) does not have a Dutch nationality. Furthermore, a considerable share of those alumni, namely 38.9%, enrols in a Master’s programme in the Netherlands after graduation.

Using the survey, we can get a better understanding of what fields of study MSLAS graduates pursue in their further education. In Table 1, we show the top ten fields of study of the programmes that respondents are currently enrolled in or graduated from after obtaining their degree from MSLAS. 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. With 7.8% and 7.5% of the graduates respectively, Life Science and Psychology are the most commonly pursued fields, followed by International relations (with 5.7%) and Political Science (with 5.4%). With 5.1% of the alumni reporting it, Neuroscience completes the top five of chosen fields of study. The table shows that MSLAS graduates pursue a wide range of educational fields. At the bottom of the top 10 list are Environmental science, Economics and Philosophy.

Further examining the access of MSP, UCV and UCM graduates to further education, the survey shows that more than four in five alumni (81.8%) did not face any additional requirements for their follow-up study. Still, three out of ten (30.0%) of the graduates have applied for a study programme without being accepted. Of this group, about one in five alumni (20.6%) indicated that there were no reasons given as to why they were rejected. From those who received a rejection for their follow-up study, 83.3% chose a second best study, 2.4% chose to follow additional courses to fulﬁl the requirements, and 14.3% decided not to continue education.

Current situation

The survey provides us with an opportunity to gain insight into the current activities and pursuits of MSLAS graduates. At the time of the survey, 16.0% of the alumni were still studying. Of those alumni who entered the labour market, only 7.0% were unemployed, whereas 93.0% were working.8

7 Of all indicated enrolled programmes, the ‘Other’ category was filled out by about 33.2% of the alumni.
8 This indicator only measures the requirements needed for the first of a maximum of three follow-up studies in the survey.
9 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 provides an overview of the types of employment of MSP, UCV and UCM graduates at the time of the survey. The large majority, 77.4%, works for an employer, whereas other types of employment are far less common. Only 5.0% works as a freelancer, 0.1% works for an employment agency and 2.3% of alumni have their own company. The remaining 15.1% of these graduates are classified as 'Other', including for example people who are working in the context of a PhD contract or during a gap year.

Table 2 provides an overview of the top 5 fields of work for employed alumni. Research occupations are the most common, with a little over one in five (21.8%) graduates working in such an occupation. With 13.8% of alumni, Advisory occupations take the second place followed by Management occupations with 9.7% of the alumni reporting such occupations. Commercial and Financial/business occupations complete the top 5 with each 8.4% of the working alumni.

In Table 3, we present the top 5 countries graduates are working in. The Netherlands is most commonly reported as country of employment with 38.5% of graduates working there. Its neighbouring countries complete the rest of the top three with 21.3% of alumni working in Germany, 7.7% in the United Kingdom and 5.3% in Belgium. Lastly, 3.5% of alumni work in the United States.

Of those who work in the Netherlands, 29.3% 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.

Table 6 illustrates the gross monthly income of MSLAS alumni. The income is only calculated for respondents belonging to the workforce. By doing this, we exclude students with side-jobs.
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 MSLAS 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 23.7% of alumni who graduated not longer than 4 years ago earn less than 2,000 gross per month. The share for those who graduated more than 4 years ago is much smaller with 6.6%. For all remaining categories but one, the share of more recent graduates is larger than that of those who graduated at least 5 years ago. The figure shows that more than half of those who graduated at least 5 years ago (57.9%) earns at least 4,000 euro per month. This share is smaller for those who graduated before 5 years ago, with 15.2%.

Having a job does not necessarily imply that it matches individual preferences and qualifications. That is why, in Figure 7, we explore a number of employability indicators for the MSLAS 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. As can be seen in the figure, for both graduation groups, the majority works at least at a bachelor level (with 93.5% for the more recent graduates and 96.5% for those who graduated at least five 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 (74.2% compared to 67.8% for those who graduated between 0-4 years ago). When we look at career opportunities, we again see this difference between the two graduation cohorts: while 78.0% of the graduates who graduated at least 5 years ago reports to have (very) many career opportunities, the share is 73.7% for the more recent graduates. This last group also reports less often to be (very) satisfied with their job, with 70.2% compared to 75.8% of those who graduated at least 5 years ago.

**FIGURE 7**
Employability indicators of MSLAS alumni

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>0-4yr</th>
<th>5+yr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work at least bachelor level for bachelor graduates</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at least master level for master or PhD graduates</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career opportunities</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with current job</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UC Alumni Survey (bachelor: N=605; master: N=594; career opportunities: N=734; satisfaction: N=736). 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 the Maastricht School of Liberal Arts and Sciences (MSLAS) alumni, covering the alumni of the Maastricht Science Programme (MSP); University College Venlo (UCV) and University College Maastricht (UCM). The University College Alumni survey was used for this purpose. We discussed how the graduates experience the programme they graduated from, their further studies and their current career situation.

Firstly, we demonstrate that a large majority of alumni is very satisfied with their choice for their MSLAS programme. The survey shows that more than four in five graduates (87.5%) would choose to do the same programme at the same institute if they had to choose again. Alumni especially value the interdisciplinarity of the programme, its quality and its academic level. Of the MSLAS graduates, 63.2% 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 MSLAS programme among alumni, 90.3% is willing to do so in one way or another.

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11 Of those alumni who graduated up to four years ago, 72.0% 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 33.3%.

12 Again, we only include those alumni who are part of the working workforce.
Secondly, we also assessed what further education of MSLAS alumni pursued. We find that more than nine in ten graduates (91.3%) pursues further education in a wide variety of fields. The student population at MSP, UCV and UCM appears to be very international, as 64.0% of alumni does not have a Dutch nationality. A considerable share of those international alumni (38.9%) enrols in a Master’s programme in the Netherlands after graduation. We also show that, graduates seem to experience that the MSLAS programme prepare them more for the actual follow-up degree than for the process of finding a suitable programme of further education. More than four in five graduates (88.5%) perceives their MSLAS programme to be helpful to a (very) high extent to succeed in further studies, only 35.9% of them is satisfied to a (very) high extent with the help provided by their institute in finding suitable further education.

Lastly, we take a closer look at the current activities and pursuits of the MSP, UCV and UCM graduates. At the time of the survey, 16.0% of alumni was still studying. Among those who entered the labour market, 93.0% secured employment, primarily working for an employer (rather than being self-employed, for instance). Research occupations (with 21.8%) and Advisory occupations (with 13.8%) are the most commonly reported fields of employment. The survey shows that 38.5% of alumni was working in the Netherlands at the time of the survey and 29.3% of those working in the Netherlands does not have a Dutch nationality. Concerning the gross monthly income of MSLAS alumni, we find, as expected, that more time since graduation is related to higher monthly income. For example, whereas 57.9% of alumni who graduated five or more years ago reported to earn more than 4,000 euro gross a month, only 15.2% 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.