

Education system

# Aruba

described and compared with  
the Dutch system

This document contains information on the education system of Aruba. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Aruba for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

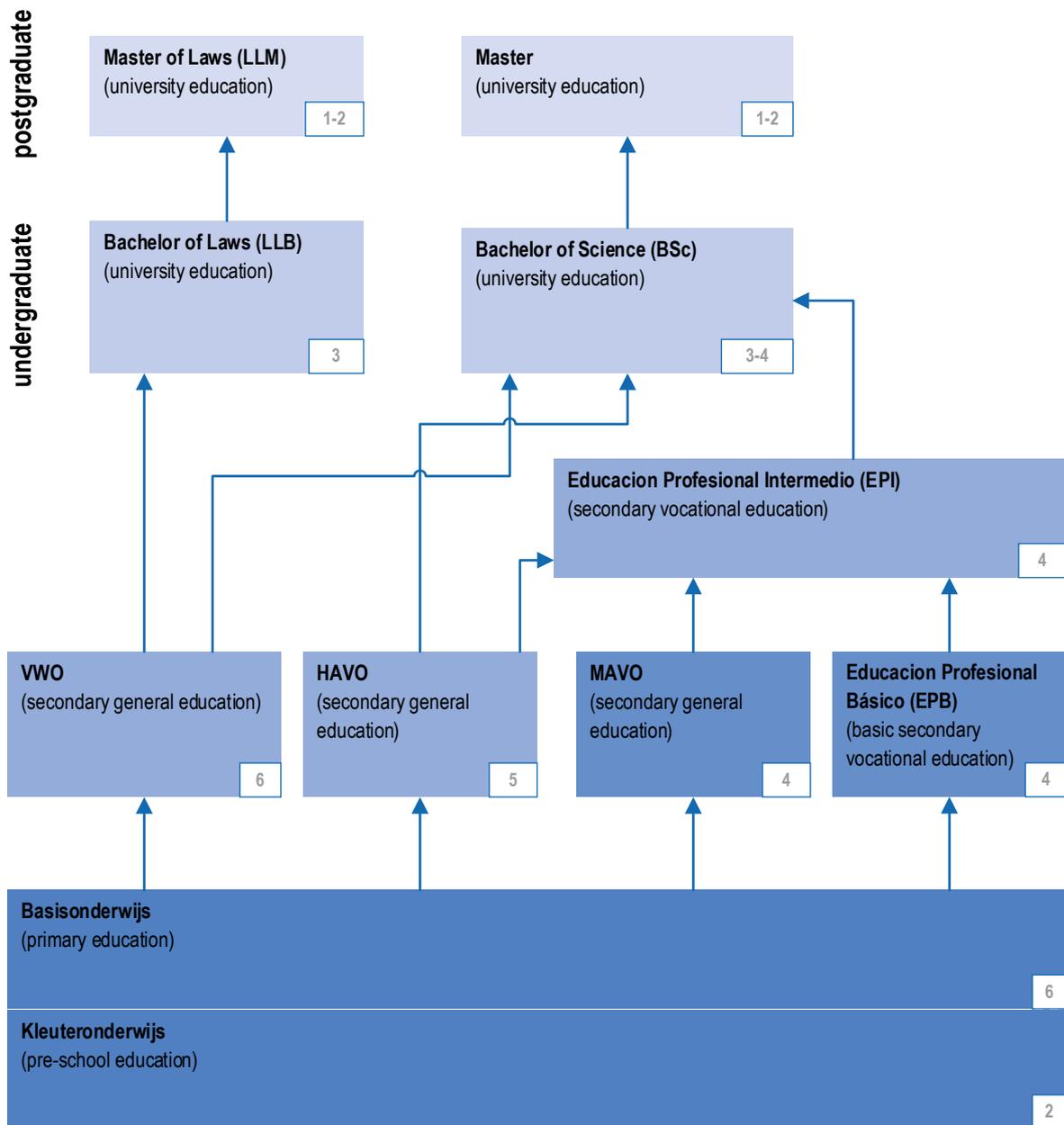
### Disclaimer

We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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## Education system Aruba



 Duration of education

## Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the most common foreign qualifications applicable to admission to higher education. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level	EQF level
<i>MAVO-diploma</i>	<a href="#">VMBO-T diploma</a>	2
Secondary vocational education diploma	<a href="#">MBO diploma</a> (qualification level 1-4)	1-4
Secondary vocational education diploma (EPI, level 4)	<a href="#">MBO diploma</a> (qualification level 4)	4
<i>HAVO-diploma</i>	<a href="#">HAVO diploma</a>	4
<i>VWO-diploma</i>	<a href="#">VWO diploma</a>	4+
<i>Graad van Volledig Bevoegd Leerkracht (IPA)</i>	<a href="#">HBO bachelor's degree</a> in education (teaching - LOBO)	6
<i>Akte van bekwaamheid van de tweede graad tot het geven van voortgezet onderwijs (IPA)</i>	<a href="#">HBO bachelor's degree</a> in education (teaching - LOVO)	6
<i>Getuigschrift van het met goed gevolg afgelegd eindexamen bedrijfseconomie (University of Aruba)</i>	<a href="#">HBO bachelor's degree</a>	6
<i>Graad bachelor in de rechten/ Bachelor of Laws (University of Aruba)</i>	<a href="#">WO bachelor's degree</a>	6
Bachelor of Science (BSc) (University of Aruba)	<a href="#">HBO bachelor's degree</a>	6
Master of Business Administration (University of Aruba)	<a href="#">HBO master's degree</a>	7
<i>Graad meester in de rechten/Master of Laws (LLM) (University of Aruba)</i>	<a href="#">WO master's degree</a>	7

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- NLQF = Dutch Qualifications Framework. EQF = European Qualifications Framework.

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- The EQF/[NLQF level](#) is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.
- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [the Dutch education system](#).
- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

## ■ Introduction

**The island of Aruba was until 1986 part of the Netherlands Antilles. Then, Aruba was granted semi-autonomous status (*status aparte*), and became an independent and autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.**

Kingdom Affairs (including independence in internal affairs), of which Education is a part, are regulated in the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which was last reviewed in 1998. Agreements have been made among the three countries at ministerial level regarding the evaluation of degrees and qualifications of general secondary education and senior secondary vocational education (MBO). These agreements are set out in the protocol for cooperation in the field of education between Aruba, the Netherlands and the (former) Netherlands Antilles.

A 'Mixed Committee', as it is called, regularly discusses changes to the educational policy, with the aim of promoting the compatibility of secondary education in Aruba with higher education in the Netherlands. In 2012, a protocol for cooperation in the field of education on basis of equality was signed between Aruba and the Netherlands. One of the appointments is that Aruban education institutes can call on Dutch-Flemisch Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) for accreditation purposes. This is in particular important for the recognition of diplomas and certificates. The education department of the Ministry of Education is responsible for the implementation of educational policy.

The education system is derived from the system in the Netherlands, and for the most part is funded by the government. Both public-run and denominational (predominantly Catholic) education is provided in Aruba. The aim is to provide the first 6 classes with education in Papiamentu, which is one of the compulsory language subjects in secondary education.

- Education is given in Dutch and in Papiamentu.
- The compulsory education is for children from 4 to 16 years.
- The academic year runs from August to June.

## ■ Primary and secondary education

### Primary education

Primary education is divided into pre-school education for children aged 4-6, and primary school for children aged 6-12. In addition to mainstream primary education, special education is also available, divided into education for children with mild learning difficulties, children with severe learning difficulties, and deaf/hearing-impaired children.

At the end of the final year of primary education, pupils choose their further secondary education, or basic secondary vocational education, based on the school's recommendation, the pupil's marks, and in certain cases a test or exam.

### Secondary education

General secondary education (*Enseñansa secundario general*) prepares pupils of 12 years and older for their future and further studies.

General secondary education is divided into:

- a 2-year basic programme divided into a basic MAVO programme and a basic HAVO/VWO programme
- a 2-year general senior secondary education programme (MAVO), with a total nominal duration of 4 years, i.e. 2 years of the basic programme and 2 years of senior secondary education
- a 3-year general senior secondary education programme (MAVO), with a total nominal duration of 5 years, i.e. 2 years of the basic programme and 3 years of senior secondary education
- a 4-year pre-university secondary programme (VWO), with a total nominal duration of 6 years, i.e. 2 years of the basic programme followed by an additional 4 years.

Vocational education is divided into:

- Basic secondary vocational education, Educacion Profesional Basico (EPB) for students aged 12-18 and with a duration of 4 years, or a duration of 3 years for the special practical education for pupils who have difficulty with learning from books ('*aspirantenopleiding*').
- Senior secondary vocational education, Educacion Profesional Intermedio (EPI) for students aged 16 and over with a duration of 3 to 4 years.

Aruba also has mainstream adult education, with public evening courses (OAA) in technical education and with the adults general secondary education (VAVO), general secondary education, evening-MAVO, evening-HAVO and evening-VWO, and Education for Jobseekers (*Enseñansa pa Empleo*).

### General secondary education

General secondary education was restructured in 2004/2005. The new system consists of a 2-year basic programme divided into a basic MAVO and a basic HAVO/VWO programme. Starting in the 2006/2007 academic year, 3 subject clusters will be available during the 2-year upper-secondary education (following the 2-year basic programme):

- Natural Sciences (*Natuurwetenschappen*);
- Human & Social Sciences (*Mens- & Maatschappijwetenschappen*);
- Humanities (*Humaniora*).

A subject cluster is a cluster of related subjects that is geared towards further education. The system of subject clusters consist of common subjects, specific subjects (including compulsory mathematics) and elective subjects. The common subjects are Dutch, English, Papiamentu, cultural and artistic appreciation, physical education, and individuals & society/social studies. Papiamentu is compulsory for 3 years, after which it can be chosen as one of the specific subjects.

There are both internal and external examinations for the specific subjects, as well as for the common language subjects Dutch and English. The final examinations for Dutch, English, Spanish 1&2, mathematics A1&2 and B1&2, physics 1&2, chemistry, biology, economics 1&2 and management & organisation use the same learning outcomes, examination programmes and examinations as those used in the Netherlands. Geography and history use comparable learning outcomes and examination programmes.

In terms of level, the *MAVO-diploma* is comparable to a VMBO-T (theoretical pathway) diploma in the Netherlands.

From primary school, it is also possible to continue directly on to HAVO or VWO. As in the Netherlands, these two are differentiated according to difficulty. All pupils start with a common 2-year basic programme. The final HAVO examinations for Dutch, English, Spanish 1&2, French 1&2, mathematics A1&2 and B1&2, physics 1&2, chemistry, biology, economics 1&2 and management & organisation use the same learning outcomes, examination programmes and examinations as those used in the Netherlands. Geography and history use comparable learning outcomes and examination programmes.

In terms of level, the *HAVO-diploma* is comparable to a HAVO diploma in the Netherlands.

The final VWO examinations for Dutch, English, Spanish, French, mathematics A1&2 and B1&2, physics 1&2, chemistry 1&2, biology 1&2, economics 1&2 and management & organisation use the same learning outcomes, examination programmes and examinations as those used in the Netherlands. Geography and history use comparable learning outcomes and examination programmes.

In terms of level, the *VWO-diploma* is comparable to a VWO diploma in the Netherlands.

The island also has *The International School of Aruba*, a type of private education based on the American model. The evaluation of this secondary school certificate in the Netherlands is treated in the same manner as that of an American secondary school certificate.

### **Vocational education**

Vocational education (*educación profesional*) consists of basic secondary vocational education (*educación profesional basico*, EPB) and senior secondary vocational education (*educación profesional intermedio*, EPI).

#### **Educación Profesional Basico (EPB)**

Basic secondary vocational education has a nominal duration of 4 years. Since August 2011, the structure is changed. Instead of a 2-year basic programme followed by a 2-year vocational programme, the first year is a preparatory year followed by a 3-year vocational programme. This gives the pupil more time to get internalised into the profession of his/her choice. The new structure has been fully implemented since 2014-2015.

The vocational programme is subdivided into 3 sectors:

- technology
- economics
- healthcare

There are also traineeships available for students in the same age group with learning difficulties. The EPB prepares students for a profession in the Aruban labour market and for further senior secondary vocational education in Aruba (*Educacion Profesional Intermedio*, EPI).

#### **Educación Profesional Intermedio (EPI)**

Senior secondary vocational education prepares students for a career in the labour market, and also for national/international further education at HBO bachelor's level. The EPI provides a senior secondary vocational qualification at level 3 (vocational training, self-employed professionals) or level 4 (management training, executive staff or specialist).

Senior secondary vocational training consists of the following units:

- Technology (*Ciencia & Tecnologia*), with training in Architecture, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering (level 4), Operational Technology (level 4) and science subject classroom assistant training (post-MBO). The latter was a one-off training course that was set up for the benefit of the Aruban educational system.
- English-taught hospitality (*Hospitalidad & Turismo*), with the following training courses: Associate of Science Degree (level 4) in Hospitality Management (credit transfer to bachelor's degree permitted) and Intermediate Employment Associate of Applied Science in Culinary Arts (level 3), certified Cook/Apprenticeship Program (level 2).
- Economics (*Economia*), with training courses in Financial Administration, Commercial Services and Tourism Administration, Executive Secretarial Skills and Touristic Secretarial Skills (all level 4).
- Healthcare and health services (*Salubridad & Servicio*), with training courses in Nursing (level 4), Home Care (level 3), Social Pedagogical Staff (level 3), Pharmacist's Assistant (level 4).

In terms of level, the *secondary vocational education diploma* is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 1-4, depending on the orientation of the programme.

In terms of level, the *secondary vocational education diploma* (EPI, level 4) with the subject 'admission to higher professional education' is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 4.

## ■ Admission to higher education

Many students leave to study abroad, as there is relatively little higher education available in Aruba. VWO, HAVO and MBO diplomas grant access to and compatibility with higher education in Aruba, the Netherlands and the former Netherlands Antilles, the United States of America, Canada and various Latin American, Caribbean and European countries.

## ■ Higher education

Aruba has 2 higher education institutions that are subsidised by the government:

- *Instituto Pedagógico Arubano*, IPA, the higher professional education teacher-training programme;
- University of Aruba (UA).

In addition to the IPA and the UA, Aruba also has a number of private institutions such as the All Saints University of Medicine, Xavier University School of Medicine, Compulearn (IT training), Doc (education and training in the fields of financial administration, management, marketing and economics) and the Caribbean University, none of which have any statutory basis (National Ordinance) in Aruba. The Caribbean University, by the way, is accredited by the American MSCHE.

### **Instituto Pedagógico Arubano (IPA)**

This institution for higher professional education trains students to become teachers at pre-school, primary school and secondary school level. The programmes with a 4-year duration start with a general orientation year for all specialisations, followed by a profession-specific phase. In their third year students complete an internship abroad (among other things), which is followed by their final project. Minimum admission requirements are a HAVO or MBO certificate, plus admission tests

Before, the institute offered 4 teacher-training programmes:

- Teacher training for children aged 4-8;
- Teacher training for children aged 6-12;
- Teacher training for *movecion y salud* (exercise and health) for children aged 4-12.

These programmes granted the qualification of Fully Qualified Teacher (*Volledig Bevoegd Leerkracht*).

The level of *Fully Qualified Teacher (Volledig Bevoegd Leerkracht)* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree in education, teacher training for primary education (LOBO).

Teacher training for a qualification in secondary teaching, second level. Upon completion of this programme, students are awarded a teaching certificate in secondary teaching, second level (*Akte van Bekwaamheid van de tweede graad tot het geven van voortgezet onderwijs*), with the qualification to teach children from 12 to 18 years old at MAVO, HAVO/VWO class 1-3, LBO and MBO.

In terms of level the *teaching certificate in secondary teaching, second level (Akte van Bekwaamheid van de tweede graad tot het geven van voortgezet onderwijs)* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree in education, teacher training for secondary education (LOVO).

Starting from 2012-2013, IPA offers the following programmes:

- Teacher Training Primary Education for the ages 4 to 8 years, and 6 to 12 years (both nominal 4 years);
- Teacher Training Basis Special and Secondary Special Education for teachers in Special Education (nominal 2½ years);
- A shortened 6-12 programme for teachers with the qualification to teach 4-8 years old children and other teachers willing to achieve the qualification for teaching 6-12 years old children.
- Second-level teacher training programme for Consumptive Techniques (CT) for secondary education, exclusively for incumbent teachers and teachers with a (MBO/HBO) diploma in catering education (nominal 3 years).

The following second-level teacher training programmes are already available at IPA:

- General social sciences
- Cultural and artistic appreciation
- Information sciences
- Nature and technology
- Papiamentu
- Personal development

Third-level teacher training is no longer offered.

Lastly, the institute offers part-time refresher courses (*pedagogisch didactisch getuigsschrift* ('certificate of education', 1½ years), remedial teaching for secondary students (2 years) and remedial teaching for primary students (2 years).

### **University of Aruba (UA)**

The University of Aruba (*Universiteit van Aruba*) primarily offers higher professional education programmes, and Law. The university has 4 faculties:

#### **1 *Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid (FdR), Faculty of Law***

A VWO diploma is the minimum requirement for admittance into this faculty (which opened its doors in 1988). The faculty currently has a 3-year bachelor's programme which culminates in a Bachelor of Laws (LLB), and a 1-year master's programme culminating in a master's degree (LLM) in Aruban Law. Prior to this, a 4-year programme was offered that granted the qualification of Master of Laws (*Meester in de Rechten*).

In terms of level, a *Bachelor in de Rechten/Bachelor of Laws* (LLB) is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree in the Netherlands.

In terms of level, *Meester in de Rechten/Master of Laws (LLM)* is comparable to a WO master's degree in the Netherlands.

## **2 Financieel Economische Faculteit (FEF), Faculty of Finance, Accounting & Marketing**

The minimum entrance requirement for this faculty (started in 1993) is a HAVO diploma or an MBO diploma at qualification level 4. At the end of the nominal 4-year programme, the *getuigschrift van het met goed gevolg afgelegd eindexamen Bedrijfseconomie* (certificate of successful completion of the final examination in Business Economics) is awarded. Since 2007, two programmes in higher professional education have been offered at this faculty (Business Economics and Commerce), both culminating in a Bachelor of Science in Economics.

In terms of level, the *getuigschrift van het eindexamen bedrijfseconomie* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree in economics in the Netherlands.

## **3 Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies (FHTMS)**

These programmes are given in English. The entrance requirement is a HAVO diploma or an MBO diploma at qualification level 4, and an English language proficiency test (TOEFL and SAT). At the end of the nominal 3-year programme, either the *getuigschrift van het met goed gevolg afgelegd bachelorexamen International Tourism Management* (certificate of successful completion of the International Tourism Management bachelor's examination) with the title of Bachelor of Science (BSc), or the *getuigschrift van het met goed gevolg afgelegd masterexamen International Tourism & Business* (certificate of successful completion of the International Tourism & Business master's examination) with the title of Master of Business Administration (MBA), will be awarded.

This faculty (started in 2005) is the only one to make use of the American (alphabetical) grading system.

In terms of level, the *Bachelor of Science (BSc)* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree in the Netherlands.

In terms of level, the *Master Business Administration (MBA)* is comparable to an HBO master's degree in the Netherlands.

#### 4 Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS)

In 2009 the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS) has been instituted at the University of Aruba. This faculty offers the following programmes:

- a 4-year Bachelor of Organisation, Governance & Management;
- a 4-year Bachelor of Social Work & Development;
- a 2-year Master of Social Work & Development.

#### Assessment systems

Marks range from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). This scale applies to primary, secondary and higher education, with the exception of the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies, which uses the American grading system. Study loads are not yet available in *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System* (ECTS) for all courses.

Numerical grade	In words	Meaning
10	Ten	Excellent
9	Nine	Very good
8	Eight	Good
7	Seven	Satisfactory
6	Six	Pass
5	Five	Almost a pass
4	Four	Unsatisfactory
3	Three	Very unsatisfactory
2	Two	Poor
1	One	Very poor

#### Quality assurance and accreditation

The Aruban government strives for high-quality local education that can compare to the level of primary, secondary and higher education in the most significant reference countries, i.e. the Netherlands and the United States. Both the preparations for and the implementation of the revision programmes bear witness to Aruba's efforts to create its own high-quality education system.

Schools' own views on what constitutes high-quality education form a core element of quality assurance, which also involves statutory requirements and obliges schools to bear in mind the characteristics of pupils and students, and the expectations of society. Schools and their competent authorities are responsible for their own internal quality assurance, which means that through the revision of

the education system, schools are encouraged to organise and assess their activities from a quality-assurance perspective.

Supervision of education is the task of the Education Inspectorate, which assesses, monitors and promotes quality in education. The instrument used by the Inspectorate is the Aruban supervisory framework (similar to that of the Dutch Inspectorate), which clearly states what is expected from schools. The framework describes fifteen quality aspects, divided up into four areas: Quality Assurance, Education & Learning, Yield, and Organisation & Management.

As part of quality assurance of higher education in Aruba, cooperation is sought with higher education institutions in the former Netherlands Antilles, the Netherlands, the United States and locally. This also includes working towards affiliation with accreditation organisations.

In 2012 a protocol for cooperation on basis of equality for education has been signed by Aruba and the Netherlands.

One of the agreements is that Aruban education institutes can apply for accreditation on the Netherlands Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). This is in particular important for the recognition of diplomas and certificates. The Instituto Pedagógico Arubano is the first education institute in Aruba, which has one of its' programmes, the teacher training programme for primary education, assessed according to the Dutch guidelines. More information is available on the [NVAO website](#).

## ■ List of higher education institutions

- [University of Aruba \(UA\)](#)
- [Instituto Pedagógico Arubano \(IPA\)](#)

## ■ Useful links

- [Website of the Department of Education of Aruba \(DEA\)](#) including [information about higher education in Aruba](#).
- Government website with [information about credential evaluation](#) and various subjects in the field of [Aruban education](#) (in Dutch only).
- Government website with [information about the Education Inspectorate \(Inspectie Onderwijs, IO\)](#) and a page with contact details (all in Dutch).
- [Website van Colegio EPI](#), Educacion Profesional Intermedio, for secondary vocational education in Aruba (Dutch only).
- [Website of Colegio Arubano](#) HAVO/VWO (in Dutch only).
- [Website from the Department of Education \(Arubahuis\)](#) in the Netherlands; this department provides care for the Aruban students who come to study in the Netherlands (in Dutch only).