

INTERVIEW WITH A COIA

R: COIA the Center Of International Affairs includes sever sub-departments like the students' support, admission, exchange which is for exchange students, recruitment the one in charge of the interviews with the people in order to make sure that they have the required knowledge/skills –you know, they do a minor control/check before coming to us. So the first team/department is marketing-recruitment that their role involves several tasks including interviewing the people. Meanwhile,actually first comes the admission department that receives the certificates and checks if the person has the right grades or checks their previous education...

A: ... and then they send the certificates to NUFFIC for checks?

R: Yes. Then they send them to NUFFIC and ... I am not sure what they do exactly but this is the sub-department before us. The marketing and recruitment team does also the interviews before ... with some people not all. And when this process is completed, the admIssion team has a shared platform with us where they put each student **under a specific status**. From this status and then, it us, our team, the students' support. We are responsible for these students. Some students come from the EU, I will not tell EU but EEA this includes for instance Norway which is not part of the EU but students from this country do not need a visa

A: Or Switzerland

R: Yes.

A: Do USA belong to EEA?

R. No. It is outside of Europe. These as well as the Canadians , Americans , Japanese, North Koreans and Australians - the most privileged countries – these people are coming without mvv while the other are **coming with mvv**. MVV is the stamp that you get from the Dutch Embassy in your country so as to come. While the other countries that I mentioned to you previously, the privileged ones, are coming straightforward without the stamp, without anything, just their passport. They are coming to Europe and when they arrive ...

A. Without visa?

R. Yes, without visa, without anything. They come and then they get the study visa and residency permit in the country that they are going to stay to continue their study. But also for a just a trip, they come like this, for 90 days they can stay to every European country they want to. At least for Netherlands, for the dutch standards. I don't know if this applies to the other countries. For example if you come from Mexico, from Bangladesh, India and from the rest of the countries you have to go first and get the mvv – it is like a sticker that is placed on the passport and then you come and get...

A. o, it is a sticker?

R. Yes, its like a sticker on the passport. And this sticker has your personal data. It is valid for three months. After three months you have to have already the residence permit in the country you are going to study. In the Netherlands. So we, as a department, initiate this procedure. The student at this stage comes to us, we are asking for some documents, a checklist in order to see in which category they do belong. Do they have already a residency permit ? They don't? We usually know in advance from admissions' department but we give the checklist. We check if they need health insurance so as to arrange it. They write down their information like the address and then we create an invoice in which we include the tuition fees, health insurance fee in case they need health insurance, visa fee which is 210 euros and the deposit proof of

sufficient funds which changes every year and for this academic year 2023-2024 is 958 euros per month by 12 times – the months - which is in total 11.496 euros. All this money should be transferred and after the payment we receive the rest of the documents and we figure out that they are undecadent. This means that they haven't committed any crime before. It is called undecadent and it is an IND document. The statement of undergoing tuberculosis test. You do a statement in which you claim that as soon as you arrive in this country you are going to do a tuberculosis test which is an XRAY. This is not for all nationalities. It is required from some people that come from specific countries. Every time IND makes a list of the countries that have high levels of turberculosis. The people that come from this listed countries should "promise" via this statement that as soon as they arrive in Netherlands they are going to undergo this test. And when they come we arrange this test and they do in GGD which is a Public Health Service.

A. Do they pay for this test?

R. it used to be free but this year they have to pay 50 euros. And they have to pay via a card but our students at this stage don't have a dutch account. So they have to wait. But this has to be done wihin 3 months in order to keep their visas. It is a requirement for a study visa to do a tuberculosis test.

A. Is this required from the countries that are not privileged?

R. No. It is a list of countries. I guess that after specific statistcs or news or according to some researchers these countries this specific year are the ones that have – usually are all the sub-saharian countries of Africa, almost all of them, they considered to have a high number of tuberculosis incidents, also Bangladesh, India, Vietnam... We have a lot of Vietnamese, Indians, Bangladeshis students that usually all of them have to do the test. Also South Africans. So the moment we receive all these documents as well as the money, they start the application for the visa. We have this platform where we share the information with IND. This is where we apply and then IND takes this into account and sends letters to ...

A. Do they check?

R. Yes they check. We can see through this platform in which exact stage of the process the application is. We can have access to the stage of the application. Is it under analysis/processing or is it approved? And after this .. Actually after applying for this, they send the first letter which is the confirmation letter which says "We have received your application " and then after a while after some weeks they send to us that it is approved. Most of the times it is approved. It hasn't happened to me a case that hasn't been approved.

A. you mean for the visa?

R. yes for the visa. And then after its approval, we let know the person. So they go to the embassy to get the mvv stamp and then they are able to come. But this is a long communication with a lot back and forth with the student. It takes a lot of time. Keep in mind that this year we did 400 something visa applications only for September. This is the largest number we have done so far. We as a team are sponsors of the students. We are like mediators between IND and the students. Consequently, instead of the students applying by themselves which would take more time, we come – the university – which is the mediator/the bridge between the students and the IND. So this is our role.

A. So this institution does exist for many years? The previous years was this kind of direct relation between students and IND when you weren't used to be the mediators?

R: The truth is that I don't know. I never wondered before. But this organization (COIA) I think was established somewhere between 2013-2014. There were still applications for visa before but now the number is increasing. The students keep sending.. There was an announcement pretty recently – because of the huge housing problem and the big amount of students - that they would stop the active recruitment. The university will stop to promote itself abroad so as to prevent students from coming. But there is always a group of students that will continue applying . And most of them are students that indeed education is their main reason to leave their country. We have also a large number of Iranians but I haven't heard yet if this is a problem for IND. However, the group of students from Bangladesh is a problem for IND. You see that there are many Vietnamese and Bangladeshi and Iranian people that apply the last years. I think Vietnamese for many years actually. Bangladeshi and Iranian people applications in the universities are increased only the last years. This is what I know.

We still collaborate with the EU students but only for issues related with the health insurance or in case they are pre master students we make for them the invoice. But in general we are not really involved with the EU student. We also arrange the first registration in the municipality of Rotterdam. In this process they are both EEA and non EU that they come for the first time in Netherlands. You know there is a repetition. This happens every year and at some point they change and then the price changes. Actually every year the price changes and it's a bit higher than the previous year.

A: I was looking some years ago and the tuition fees in the master was around 8000 for the non EU and now is around 11000 something

R: You mean the proof of sufficient funds?

A: NO the tuition fees.

R: I don't remember exactly how much are the tuition fees. It must be 10000 for the bachelor and for the masters is 12688 but WDKA has a bit lower tuition fees - 1 or 2 thousands lower cause WDKA some years ago was autonomous. I guess there were financial issues and became part of the hogeschool. (...)

A. Do you have a rate of students that eventually do not make it cause they don't fulfill the requirements?

R: Yes for sure. Some people cannot pay. We may have communication and at some point they stop responding to us. Obviously they cannot pay. At the same time people that are already in Netherlands, they show their bank statement. But all this stuff I mentioned are for the people that come for the first time. If they have already been studying in a different institution in Netherlands and now they want to study in Hogeschool, they have already been through this process and they have valid dutch residency permit. It's not that is expired and they come to us. In case the residency permit is expired or they are illegal and they come to us , we have to start all over again. They have to go back to their countries and get the mvv and send the deposit, despite the fact that they are in Netherlands. In the case they have a valid residency permit or they are high skilled migrants and they want to change into study visa or they want to keep with the visa they already have or they used to study in a different university and they want to continue studying in Hogeschool, we take the sponsorship from this university. The previous university was responsible for the student and now we become responsible . In that case the only thing that we ask for is the bank statement from the bank account of the student in Netherlands or from abroad. But if it is from abroad it has to fulfill some requirements like the stamp , signature , telephone, email, bank details in order to make sure that this bank exists.

A. The stamp and the signature from who?

R: From the bank. And this statement has to be from a family member or a close relative. It's still okay. It doesn't have to be strictly from the student's account. But if this money in the bank statement come from a person that stays in Netherlands and not from the student themselves , it becomes more complicated. The person who sponsors the student should work in Netherlands and have to prove it by showing the employment contract and bring some documents from Gemeente. You can also find all the required documents online in the website of Rotterdam University Of Applied Sciences in the section important information for international students and there you can find some of the information. The more detailed information are send via email to the student. You can also find some information on Hint. It is a website that can have access only the students with their password and username. There is a part that is accessible to everyone and another part that is accessible when you become a student.

(browsing the website together)

R: Also Chinese people had an extra requirement previously regarding the English efficiency. They had to make a special test. Its not like the others that had to give IELTS.

A: Why?

R: I am not sure.

You can also go to the IND website that has the details around required amounts income. It says for every category of people and the students are among them.. And it is 11496 euros. And the pre master is different

A. The thing that you said that you are in charge for one year after the completement of he program. What do you mean by that? In relation to residency permit?

R. Yes. What does the student do? Did they finish? Are they in a legal/illegal state? We have to inform IND in a way.

A. You mean if the student finds a job should report it to you?

R. No. Its more about being in a legal or illegal status. They finished their studies and they deregister from IND. Are they legal or illegal now? Basically this. Cause they may be illegal and also work illegally. We are obliged to know. It is something that I dont really know precisely. Its like the IND rebukes us. The can say that you don't pay attention and check the students cause your students doped from school and now they are illegal. There is this friction and they can say to us that you don't do this right.