

Date

February 28, 2023

Subject

Numerus fixus bachelor Psychology for
academic year 2024-2025

Our reference

ESSB/VB/21800/lvr

Your reference

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Appendix

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3. Letter of advice Faculty Council numerus fixus

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Dear Executive Board,

With this letter, I would like to request a continued numerus fixus for the bachelor Psychology, for the academic year 2024-2025, for an intake of maximum 600 students.

In the appendices of this letter, we have added a description of the proposed selection procedure 2024-2025 that is in line with our proposal from last year, with small adjustments based on evaluations of prior selection rounds.

As in previous years, in this letter I elaborate on our current situation and offer the largely unchanged motivation for our request: 1) we perceive the numerus fixus as necessary to preserve our educational quality and educational methods, and 2) all educational directors of Dutch Psychology programs agreed on implementing a numerus fixus, meaning that if we drop out of this agreement we risk a higher intake than we can handle and the labour market can facilitate.

Current situation

The numerus fixus is currently running for its third year, following the nationwide agreement of 2019 on a numerus fixus for all new admissions for the bachelor Psychology, since at that time increasingly more students applied for both the Dutch- and English-language tracks of the bachelor psychology.

Educational quality

Our bachelor program uses activating educational methods. These types of learning are based on the idea that the student plays an active role in the learning process (student-centred education). Such methods focus less on lecturing with the purpose of information transfer (as is the case in traditional educational systems). Instead, the aim is to stimulate active participation of the student in small educational groups. While there are a couple of collective lectures in the bachelor program, small-scale tutorials and practical meetings are at the very core of our educational method. A numerus fixus enabled us to get a grip on the size and quality of our programme.

To ensure a high quality and sustainable educational system, we continue to evaluate, and revise the curriculum and educational methods in our bachelor programmes, including Psychology. In alignment with our educational vision, we continue to focus on practical skills training and our educational methods will remain activating, collaborative, and small-scale. Therefore, we argue that a numerus fixus is necessary to maintain our education quality, and to prevent that 'students become a number'.

Nation-wide agreement

In 2019, the "Kamer Psychologie", a forum of the VSNU that is hosted by NIP (Nederlands Instituut voor Psychologen) in which education directors of all psychology bachelor programmes in the Netherlands participate, agreed upon establishing a numerus fixus (of 600 students) for all bachelor programmes in psychology in the Netherlands, with the labour market in view. If all universities have more than 950 graduates (the ESSB-intake before the numerus fixus) each year, this would exceed the demand for psychologists in the labour market.

Accessibility

Based on the motivation detailed above, a numerus fixus prevents our intake to exceed our capacity and negatively impact our educational quality. A capacity limitation also suits the EUR-wide strategy to maintain educational quality while student numbers are rising. While considering the numerus fixus a necessary measure, we do wish to limit its negative outcomes (in terms of accessibility) as much as possible. We have therefore designed a selection procedure that aims to select qualified students who are motivated to enrol in this programme, and who may contribute to a diverse classroom. In this process, we value the results students obtained prior to enrolling in the bachelor programme psychology as well as the (untapped) potential of students who are motivated to pursue their diploma in psychology.

Furthermore, we have set the maximum capacity as high as possible, at 600 students. We consider this to be the maximum number of students, based on two factors. First the nation-wide agreement, mentioned above, included a maximum of 600 students; departing from this would potentially deter applicants and cause them to apply at other universities rather than encourage them to consider which programme best suits them. In addition, based on experience with large cohorts prior to implementing a numerus fixus we feel that a maximum of 600 students is still feasible in terms of educational quality and personal attention to students.

Evaluation & Improvements

We continuously monitor and evaluate the selection procedure to ensure we fulfil the abovementioned aims. It is therefore that we consider it necessary to revise the selection procedure to safeguard the quality of the programme, as well as the candidates' chances to successfully. Specifically, we therefore propose to make the following change(s) to the selection procedure for enrolment for academic year 2024-2025:

Admission requirements - Mathematics

The bachelor psychology is an academic programme. Attention is therefore paid to statistics and research methods. In that context, we consider it important that candidates have sufficient prior knowledge of mathematics. From the academic year 2024-2025, the programme therefore proposes to introduce an (additional) admission requirement:

- Candidates who obtained a HBO-propedeuse or an HBO Associate degree at a Dutch University of Applied Sciences, are only eligible for admission if they have passed the Mathematics A or B final exam at higher general continued education (Hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs, 'HAVO') level or higher.

This proposal aligns with existing admissions requirements at other Psychology programmes in the Netherlands. All eight bachelor psychology programmes set a maths requirement for applicants with a HBO propedeuse and three out of eight also set this requirement for candidates who have completed an HBO degree in full.

By applying the same maths requirements as already exists at sister programmes, we make sure that candidates who are inadmissible elsewhere,

and who have insufficient mathematical knowledge to successfully participate in our own bachelor's programme, are excluded from the selection procedure.

Selection criteria – Motivation & study attitude

Based on three selection rounds (for enrolment in 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023), more information is now available on how to improve our selection procedure. Based on these data, specifically concerning the reliability of the motivation criterium, and considering our goal of inclusivity, we propose to change: 1) the selection criteria and 2) their respective weights. First, we propose to combine the criteria motivation and study attitude into one criterium. The survey on motivation now includes more questions, and these are closed instead of open-ended, and the score weights 33,3% (equal to the weight of the other two components, school grades and scores on an online test). The adjusted selection procedure is described in detail in the appendix of this letter.

I hope that you agree with our proposal to implement a numerus fixus including the proposed changes for the bachelor Psychology for 2024-2025, for an intake of 600 students based on this letter and the appendices.

Yours sincerely,



Prof.dr. V.J.J.M Bekkers
Dean ESSB

Cc: Prof.dr. Bram Steijn, vice-dean education ESSB
Kimberly van Aart-Soppe MA MSc, policy advisor education ESSB
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Selection procedure for B Psychology

For the *numerus fixus* (600) for 2024-2025 at ESSB, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Short introduction

For the academic year 2024-2025 it is proposed to maintain a *numerus fixus* for the bachelor's programme psychology (both the Dutch and international tracks) for 600 students at most, in accordance with an agreement of the Kamer Psychologie VSNU to establish a *fixus* for all bachelor's programmes Psychology in the Netherlands, except for those programmes that wish to grow. For a detailed motivation, please refer to the cover letter.

The proposed *fixus* means that the admission of students will entail two steps:

1. the assessment of the admissibility of applicants (step 1)
2. the ranking of these applicants based on three selection criteria.

These criteria are based on the envisioned profile of our student population, evidence-informed by data previous selection procedures for the Psychology programme at ESSB, and the criteria match the objectives that we have.

First, we aim at a student population (in both tracks) that reflects the diverse composition of the Rotterdam population as much as possible. Many graduates find suitable jobs in the metropolitan area of Rotterdam and surroundings. This means that the program delivers students who are well-equipped for the job market of a psychologist in an increasingly diverse society.

Second, we strive to select students with a study attitude and motivation that fit with our vision on education and our educational methods, that are primarily small-scale and activating. Our educational methods, among which problem based and team-based learning, are each very active forms of education that are particularly suitable for curious, motivated students who can work well with others.

The selection is based on these objectives.

Admission

After registration via Studielink (no later than 15 January 2024) for all applicants their admissibility will be checked. This will be done based on the admission requirements stipulated in Article 2.1 of the bachelor Education & Examination Regulations (EER) for 2022-2023. For the International Bachelor in Psychology track, a language requirement (for English proficiency) is also in place and detailed in the EER. Furthermore, students need to adhere to a math-requirement.

Selection

Applicants who are deemed eligible for admission will receive an invitation to participate in the selection procedure. This selection is based on the following components, that each weigh for one third of the overall score (33,3% each):

1. school grades
2. scores on an online test (multiple choice)
3. motivation to study (online questionnaire)

Part I Grades

1. School grades

Applicants will submit their grades for the penultimate year of prior education (or for the last year if this has been completed already). For Dutch applicants this will probably be the secondary school grades. For applicants with a foreign prior education, the submitted grades will be recalculated based on a conversion table, that is drawn up mainly based on information from Nuffic, to ensure comparability of grades across the pool of applicants.

Part II Selection assessment

Applicants receive materials to be studied in preparation for the test and are given access to an online assessment tool, with which components 2 and 3 will be assessed.

This assessment includes a total of about 50 questions and will take a total of 6-7 hours of time to complete (this is comparable to the time spent on selection procedures of other bachelor programs psychology). A Dutch and English version is available for all questions, in accordance with the fact that the programme includes a Dutch- and English-language track. The different parts are described below.

2. Online test

Applicants will be requested to study three recorded lectures and three chapters from basic textbooks on subjects relevant to the psychology programme, that also reflect the educational approach of the bachelor's programme in psychology (activating educational methods, such as problem based learning). The subjects are representative for the study content of the first year of the Psychology bachelor programme. A few questions should be answered by performing a statistical calculation. Methodological questions can also be asked.

The materials provided to students will match those included in the bachelor's programme, meaning that they are in English, and will be of a bachelor-1 level, making the test feasible for applicants. In this way, the students will simultaneously prepare for the online assessment and get a better idea of what awaits them in the first year if they are selected. The answers to the questions can be in English or Dutch, depending on the chosen track. Studying the material in preparation for the exam takes about 5 hours.

The online test will be part of the larger online assessment, which can be interrupted and continued at a later time. However, no earlier or later parts of the test can be seen or changed. The already completed part is saved and one continues with the test. The total time spent on the test is recorded.

The test consists of 24 multiple choice questions (with 4 answer options), 8 for each subject. The applicant must have completed the test before a predetermined date.

3. Motivation to study

Prospective students must complete an online questionnaire in this part of the online assessment. This consists of an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire covers the applicant's readiness to start and continue the Psychology programme regardless of sacrifices, setbacks, misfortune or disappointing perspectives.

Furthermore, an applicant who goes beyond just studying the material, who is curious and has a critical attitude (internalizing behaviour), will score better on this component than a student who primarily learns to pass a test (externalizing behaviour). This kind of motivation and associated study-behavior fits with active, small-scale education as used in our Psychology programme.

Ranking of students

Standard scores (z-scores) will be calculated for each component, so that it is possible to assess how applicants score in relation to each other on the components of the assessment. All z-scores will be summed up to create a total score. In other words, there will be no scores for components of the assessments. Each component assessment contributes equally to the total score.

The total score determines the final rank number for each candidate. When total scores are equal, the score on the online test, within the group of applicants with the same overall score, determines the final rank number.

When registering in Studielink, applicants choose either the international or Dutch track. However, one ranking will be made for the program, instead of separate rankings per track, as is required by the Higher Education Act (WHW). At first, the rank number determines whether someone is offered a place in the program (when the number is 600 or lower) or not (when the number is 601 or higher).

When an applicant receives a message about the rank number and that rank number means that he / she is selected, this message also includes a confirmation of the track that has been chosen by the applicant and in which he/she is thus placed. After choosing a track, applicants cannot switch from the Dutch track to the international track or the other way around.

In total, an applicant may participate three times in a selection procedure for the bachelor's programme Psychology at the EUR. If students participate several times in a selection procedure for the bachelor's programme Psychology at the EUR, each participation will be regarded as new.

The selection procedure takes place only once a year. The scores and rank numbers of cannot be transferred to the next academic year (or to a different university). The selection procedure must then be completed by the student in its entirety.

The EUR does not organize an inspection of scores, although an applicant has the right to request the personal data concerning him/her (on the basis of the GDPR, article 15). National laws and regulations and corresponding deadlines apply in this selection procedure (see www.studiekeuze123.nl/selection).

Applicants will find information on the admission and selection procedure on the following web pages:

<https://www.eur.nl/en/bachelor/international-bachelor-psychology/admission>

<https://www.eur.nl/bachelor/psychologie/toelating>

Faculty	Erasmus School of Social and behavioural Sciences
Programme	Bachelor Psychology (including the International Bachelor Psychology track)
Date	16-12-2022
Subject	Report on bachelor Psychology numerus fixus (2020-2021, 2021-2022,2022-2023)
Author(s)	Dr. Annemarie Hiemstra, Pieter van Lamoen, Msc, Roan-Paul Spolmink, MSc.

Qualitative review

For the bachelor Psychology (including the International Bachelor Psychology track), candidates were ranked according to their scores on four criteria including the following weight as used in the final ranking:

Criteria	Weight %
GPA of de the diploma/grade list	25
Knowledge test	25
Questionnaire on motivation	25
Questionnaire on study attitude	25

Alignment with selection goals

This selection procedure for the bachelor Psychology was first implemented in recruitment year 2019-2020, meaning that in 2020-2021 the first cohort started with the bachelor based on a numerus fixus selection procedure and this was continued for cohorts 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Thus, we now have better insight into whether the results of the selection procedure match its goals from the previous cohorts and, where available, we have some limited insights to the 2022-2023 cohort. First, we detail the goals formulated in the application for the numerus fixus below and explain per goal whether these were met and/or whether there is reason for proposing an adjustment of the selection procedure for future cohorts.

“First, we aim at a student population (in both tracks) that reflects the diverse composition of the Rotterdam population. Many graduates find suitable jobs in the metropolitan area of Rotterdam and surroundings. This means that the program delivers students who are well-equipped for the job market of a psychologist in a diverse society.”

To meet this first objective of the selection procedure, considering the students who ultimately were selected to start with the bachelor, we based the selection procedure on recent scientific insights to assure good predictive validity (i.e., admission results are related to the outcome of interest such as study success) and fairness (i.e., unbiased against diverse students). Research shows that traditional and often-used admission procedures consisting of solely standardized cognitive tests and high school GPA tend to adversely impact students with a migration background, as they show systematic differences in scores between sub-groups, and thus in chances of acceptance (Niessen & Meijer, 2017). Diverse students, such as first-generation students and students with a migration background do, for example, have lower chances of acceptance when only cognitive indicators are assessed (Schmitt et al., 2009; Sinha et al., 2011). Because of our first objective, to make the admission procedures inclusive, we used two approaches, namely the inclusion of non-cognitive selection measures and the use of a curriculum sample test (based on Niessen & Meijer, 2017; Stegers-Jager et al., 2015). Non-cognitive, or ‘character-based’ criteria include indications of motivation and study skills, habits, and other behavioural tendencies. Non-cognitive selection measures in admission procedures offer the possibility to compensate for lower cognitive scores, which may reduce adverse impact on selection decisions for minorities. At the same time, non-cognitive measures tend to show poor predictive validity compared to cognitive measures (i.e., relation with study success; Niessen & Meijer, 2017). This presents us with a ‘diversity-validity dilemma’ (Pyburn et al., 2008). Because some studies

suggest that the inclusion of these non-cognitive criteria indeed increases the chances of success for minority students, while maintaining good predictive validity, we decided to adopt such an approach in our selection procedure at EUR (Bradburn & Schmitt, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2009; Stegers-Jager et al., 2015).

A first analysis data of the background characteristics of national students enrolled in 2021-2022 indicates the 29% of the students from this cohort has a migration background (Erasmus School of Social & Behavioural Sciences, 2022). This percentage is somewhat higher compared with the percentage of students with a migration background the previous cohort 2020-2021 (22%) and equal to the cohort 2019-2020, when no selection was used. Furthermore, sub-group differences in the overall selection scores within the selected group of students are minimal. These first results are indications that there is no or minimal adverse impact of the used selection criteria and that student population diversity in terms of migration background is not affected by the selection procedure.

“Second, we strive to select students with a study attitude and motivation that fit with our vision on education and our educational methods, that are primarily small-scale and activating. In many courses we adopt problem-based learning, which is a very active form of education that is particularly suitable for curious, motivated students who can work well with others.

Regarding this second aim of the selection procedure, we have designed the procedure in such a way that students were assessed on their motivation to study Psychology, particularly their motivation to study Psychology in Rotterdam with its PBL approach, and their study attitude. When using the results of the exam of the first course in the bachelor, we found the strongest predictors to be the pre-university grades and the multiple choice exam results (Lamoen et al., 2022). The other scores regarding motivation and study-attitude were *not* related to indicators of study success (i.e., GPA of the whole first year).

The students who enroll after the selection procedure do seem to perform better. This is best visible based on the number of students who received a binding study advice prior to the implementation of the selection procedure in 2020 and those enrolled in the following academic years.

In cohort 2018-2019 the number of students who got a positive binding study advice (BSA) was 54% (Erasmus School of Social & Behavioural Sciences, 2021). In the following cohort 2019-2020 around 58% received a positive BSA. Then for the students of cohort 2020-2021, the first who went through our selection procedure, 87% received a positive BSA. These results are, however, influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated measures, such as the prolonged BSA. Nevertheless, when comparing the positive BSA percentages of the Psychology students with other ESSB bachelor programmes, it is clear that the students of the 2020-2021 cohort perform better compared to other students in the similar situation caused by COVID-19. Moving forward to cohort 2020-2021 around 75% of students received a positive BSA. In conclusion, the selection procedure seems to be positively related to study success and the group overall performs better than earlier years in terms of receiving a positive BSA. This furthermore indicates that the selection procedure seems to successfully select students who would be likely to excel in our bachelor program. The positive relation of the various selection components with study success, however, is caused only by two components of the selection measures, namely pu_GPA and the multiple choice exam. The scores on motivation and study-attitude are not related to study success.

Student population

For cohort 2021-2022, 269 students started the English-language international bachelor Psychology track, while 270 students started the Dutch-language Psychology track (Erasmus School of Social & Behavioural Sciences, 2022). In total, 539 new students enrolled. In terms of the diversity of this group, we refer to nationalities within the described tracks and that could furthermore be specified as:

Track	Year	EER	NON-EER	DUTCH	Tot
International bachelor Psychology (English-track)	2021-2022	176	50	43	269
Bachelor Psychologie (Dutch-track)	2021-2022	5	1	264	270

We conclude that the proportion of international students in 2021-2022 has increased compared to previous cohorts. Because all applicants participate in the same selection procedure and for procedural justice reasons, we cannot influence these proportions. This may change for future cohorts, depending on the implementation of the 'Wet Taal en Toegankelijkheid' that possibly allows for a *fixus* (and selection procedure) at the track-level.

Adjustments, with a view on alignment

Finally, compared to the request for implementing a *numerus fixus*, we made no changes to the *contents* of the selection procedure. In the instruments for assessing applicants on the abovementioned criteria, we have made a change in the division of open and closed questions for the component's motivation and study attitude. This has resulted in mostly closed questions and a few open questions. We did this with the aim to better operationalize motivation and study attitude in a valid way, based on literature on study motivation and study attitude (e.g., Wouters, Croiset, Galindo-Garre, & Kusurkar, 2016), while maintaining a fair selection instrument that relates to expected study progress. Furthermore, this approach was aimed to enable us to continue to assess the large numbers of applications in a fair, reliable, and manageable way (i.e., in terms of staff hours). Analysis of the results, however, showed that rater agreement in scoring of the open-ended questions did not meet standards that are generally required for high-stakes selection decisions (Stobart & Eggen, 2012). This was the case despite quality measures that were taken by us, including practice and calibration sessions. Furthermore, the selection components for motivation and study-attitudes, including open-ended and closed questions, were not related to study outcomes (i.e., lacked predictive validity, as described above).

Although our overall selection procedure has met our validity and inclusiveness aims over the past years, we propose to improve components of the selection procedure for upcoming *numerus fixus* selection assessments even further, based on the data that we now have available since 2020. The proposed changes are described in the selection procedure for cohort 2024 – 2025. These refinements allow us to meet our selection goals in an even better way, ensuring valid and inclusive enrolment into our Psychology programme.

Reflection on educational quality

As also explained in our letter detailing the request for a *numerus fixus*, we consider 600 to be the maximum number of students, based on two factors. First the nation-wide agreement, mentioned in our letter, included a maximum of 600 students; departing from this would potentially deter applicants and cause them to apply at other universities rather than encourage them to consider which programme best suits them, based on contents and educational methods. In addition, based on experience with large cohorts prior to implementing a *numerus fixus*, we feel that 600 students remains quite feasible in terms of educational quality and personal attention to students. Nonetheless, we are monitoring work pressure among staff, as well as our educational concept, and will continue

to improve our programme, and/or our selection procedure and maximum capacity, to make sure that educational quality is well-balanced with accessibility.

Quantitative review cohorts 2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023

	2020-2021	%	2021-2022	%	2022-2023	%
Applications via Studielink on January 15	2108		2589		2994	
Candidates ranked in April in Studielink	1339		1670		1883	
Plaatsingsbewijzen' (invitations to enroll) send out in total	899		941		924	
Accepted invitations	549	61	548	58,2	539	58
Declined invitations	285	32	295	31,4	297	32
Expired invitations	65	7	98	10,4	88	10
Highest ranking number issued in invitations to enroll	975		1001			
Total appeals	7		8		4	
Unfounded	2		2		0	
Unfounded	5		-			
Withdrawn			5		4	
Settled			1		0	

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Subject
Letter of advice Numerus Fixus and
Capacity Limitations 2024-2025

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Page

Appendices

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Dear prof. dr. Bekkers,

The Faculty Council of ESSB would like to provide the management team with positive advice for the 'Numerus Fixus and Capacity Limitations Psychology 2024-2025. The letter concerning this matter was discussed during the last Faculty Council meeting on February 16, 2023 during which the Program Director of the Master Psychology, Rene Zeelenberg was also invited.

We are of the opinion that, given the large number of students that enrolls, and the workload of teachers, a Numerus Fixus and a Capacity Limitation are still necessary for the program of Psychology,

We look forward to the evaluations of the selection procedures, especially the selection procedures of the capacity limitation, and hope to receive those outcomes in the future.

Best regards,
Faculty Council ESSB

Josanne van Dongen (chair)
Doris van der Knaap (vice-chair)

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