



Viaa

Christian University of Applied Sciences

In this magazine

Interaction between research, education and the professional field

Iris went to Germany for an internship, research and courses

Updated programme makes exchange accessible for more students

International term at Viaa brought together Gerald and Lexi

In this magazine

1. Boundless stories across the border	3
2. Iris went to Germany for an internship, research and courses	4
3. Alumnus Mark looks back on his internship abroad	6
4. International term at Viaa brought together Gerald en Lexi	8
5. Lecturer Bart Cusveller aims at interaction between research, education and the professional field	10
6. Updated programme makes exchange accessible for more students	12
7. Dordt and Viaa - a long-standing partnership	14
8. News	15
9. Zwolle hotspots - according to international student Stephanie	16
10. The job of the year: a new assembly hall - the beating heart of Viaa	18
11. Student Alien Mijnheer shares experiences about the Teacher in Europe conference	19
12. After 20 years Tjalling Oosterhuis bids farewell to Viaa	20
13. Meet the team: International Office	22
14. History of Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences	24

Why Viaa?

1 Christian University of Applied Sciences

Unique in Europe, specialised in social domains, with Christian identity, all staff has a Christian background.

2 Small scale university

Individual approach, small groups, personal character of the university, easy to build new contacts with teachers and students.

3 High quality education

Accredited by the government, all programmes top rated in several Dutch rankings, high student satisfaction.

4 Well-situated

Zwolle is a typical Dutch student city with student life. Within 2 hours travel distance from major cities in The Netherlands and Germany, including Amsterdam airport and Düsseldorf airport.

5 Problem based teaching

Practical cases of the future field of profession are the starting point of teaching. Theory is always related to practise.

6 Practise oriented, English taught semesters

Practise oriented studying, fieldtrips, short internships, guest lecturers.

7 Unique intercultural programme

Learning about Dutch culture and society through an excursion programme, Dutch language training, live-in option with Dutch host families and a buddy programme with Dutch students.



Colofon

This magazine was created for Viaa International Office.
All rights reserved. September 2022

Text and coordination

International Office (Marlinde Liefijm) and Arnoud Gort

Concept and design

Alfred Leemhuis

Photography

Ingeborg Lukkien, Christein van Hoffen, Arnoud Gort, GGZ Drenthe and students

Contact

Contact us at internationaloffice@viaa.nl

And check our socials for more information and updates:

 Viaa International

 @viaainternationaloffice

 www.linkedin.com/company/viaachristianuniversity

Boundless stories across the border

We at Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences hope our students will learn their significance for society and how to deal with creation in a sustainable way. In our opinion this experience should not be limited to the Dutch context and society, we like to cross the borders. That is why we are proud of our students who broaden their horizons abroad.

Think of Iris, our Social Work student (page 4) who went to Germany for her internship. It is a valuable experience that teaches you more about yourself as a person and about who you are as a professional within an international and intercultural context. Broadening your worldview will last you a lifetime.

Fifteen years ago, our alumnus Mark did an internship in India. On page 6 Mark explains how he has learned that it is not so much about what you do, but about who you are. He connected this lesson to the Neuman Systems Model taught at Viaa's Nursing training. It is inspiring to learn how Mark has embraced this vision throughout his career.

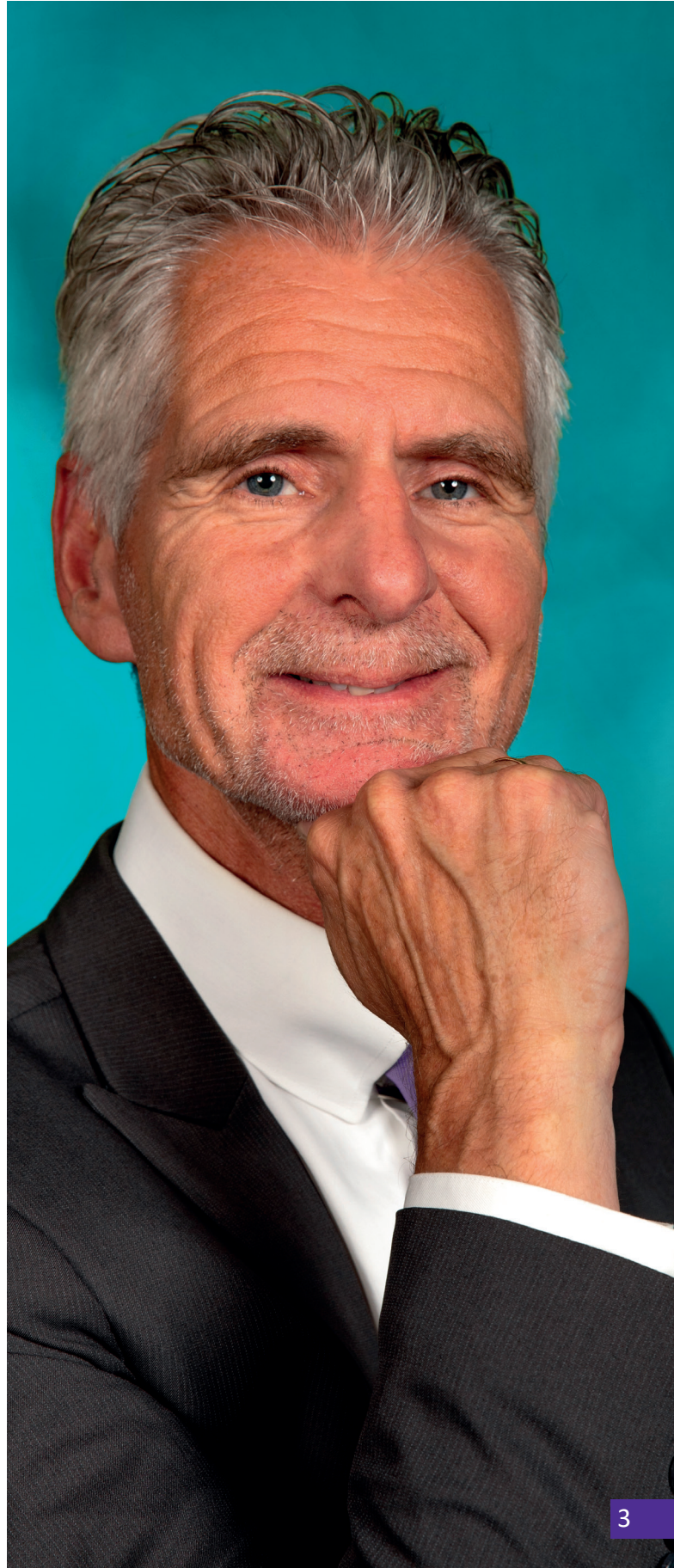
At Viaa, we are grateful for the partnerships we have worldwide. In the past year we committed ourselves to strengthening current partnerships and to building new relationships. We aim to continue to offer future professionals international experiences like Iris and Mark had.

This magazine is a collection of stories across the border. Stories about working with and for other people. We look forward to a new season full of inspiration, new international students and intercultural experiences. Each year, it is a privilege to see our students grow into inspired and inspiring professionals.

Enjoy the read!

Wishing you all the best,

Dirk Wakker
Chairman of the Board
Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences



‘Broadening your worldview
will last you a lifetime’



Want to know more about
Evangelische Hochschule?
Scan the QR-code.



Want to know more about BBQ?
Scan the QR-code.

Iris went to Germany for an internship, research, and courses

Iris Blokzijl likes to help out others and wants to learn new things. In 2022, she seized the opportunity to do an internship abroad. Iris (20) studies Social Work at Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences. Her international internship was an unforgettable experience in Ludwigsburg, Germany. Here Iris was allowed to work with people at a distance from the labour market.

Not only did Iris an internship in Ludwigsburg, but she also did research and took classes at the Evangelische Hochschule Ludwigsburg (Evangelical University of Applied Sciences). Lecturer Jaap Roose was Iris' internship supervisor from Viaa. "This combination enabled Iris to take a unique trajectory that has been very enriching for her personal development. Together with some Viaa colleagues I visited the Evangelische Hochschule Ludwigsburg in Ludwigsburg. During that visit I had the chance to lecture Iris and her international fellow students. I look back on that with great pleasure!"

New people

Looking back, what do you gain from an international internship? This is obvious for Iris: "The most beautiful thing I gained are the new people I have met. I really had a great time with my fellow students. Students from Germany, but also from Peru, the United States, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, and Spain. In such a mixture of cultures you learn a lot from

each other!" The courses Iris took provided valuable insights for her future profession. In the Project Studies course, she learned about the importance of managing projects well, for example. Iris states: "It's really neat that I could apply this knowledge immediately in the project that I organised during my internship!" Finally, Iris mentions the language. "During my internship we communicated in both German and English. I now speak and understand both languages much better thanks to my time in Germany. "

Benefit

As a social worker, Iris hopes to work with people from various backgrounds. "Thanks to this internship, I have been able to personally develop further in many areas. I'm grateful for that," she sums up her experiences. Jaap always enjoys the stories students share upon their arrival in the Netherlands following their internship abroad. Stories such as the ones Iris shared about her time in Germany. "The internship has clearly brought her a lot in terms of personal development. That's something I see happening all the time: an international internship abroad has an impact on students. Broadening your worldview will last you a lifetime." Jaap expresses a wish for Iris when she will start working as a social worker: "I hope that your eagerness to learn will never stop and that you continue to assess every situation in your work and in your life without judgment."



**'There are others doing
the same thing, but no
one can do it like you do'**

Alumnus Mark: “In India I learned it is not about what you do, but about who you are”

In 2005, Mark van de Streek (39) graduated in Nursing at Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences. Today, Mark works as a manager and strategic advisor at the GGZ Drenthe (Centre for Mental Health Care). He was one of the many Viaa students to do an internship abroad during his studies. Mark went to India. How does he look back upon this experience?

Mark explains that as the interview approached he would think back to his student years and to the time he spent in India.

Friends

Mark looks back upon his college years with great pleasure. “We had such a nice group of students. We got along well. I made friends at Viaa that I still meet today. Our annual getaway is coming up soon”, Mark says. He speaks highly of the atmosphere at the Nursing programme in particular. “I liked how the teachers allowed me quite some elbow room during my training. Not in a way like ‘anything goes,’ but they had the gift of seeing each student for what they were worth. With such an approach you can develop into a unique professional.”

Delivery

An example of the space Mark was granted is the internship that he was able to do in his third year. Mark went to India, to a small-scale hospital in a poor area. “I wanted some challenge during my internship and when I came up with this option by Verre Naasten, an aid agency, the staff at the Nursing department did everything they could to prepare me

well.” It turned out to be a memorable experience. Assisting at a delivery stands out as most special. When the little boy lay safely on his mother’s belly, the parents insisted that Mark would name their baby. “I named the boy Roshan, meaning ‘radiant light’.”

The person behind the patient

It is not about what you do but about who you are. As far as Mark is concerned, this is the most important lesson he learned in India. It’s a motto he applies in his work at GGZ Drenthe as well. “If you have the opportunity to be yourself and to be in control of your own goals that’s when you have full play. This applies to our clients too. Within the period of time clients stays with us, it is our job to not make them dependent. I think we should always see the person behind the patient. In my job, I can optimise this process, starting from my role, but more importantly from who I am as a person.”

Neuman Systems Model

Mark links this professional attitude directly to the vision of the training he took at Viaa twenty years ago. “The Neuman Systems Model I encountered during my Nursing training taught me to focus on the complete person of the client, not just on their physical or mental problem. This has been a valuable lesson.” Mark wishes today’s students experiences similar to his own. “Whether you go abroad or stay in the Netherlands: Find out who you are in what you do. There are others doing the same thing, but no one can do it like you do.”



Mark as a student at work at the hospital in India





Lexi, Gerald, and their daughter Eveline at home in Capelle aan den IJssel. The family hopes to welcome a new baby in November.

International term at Viaa brought together Gerald and Lexi

It was January 2011, early morning. Gerald Oudman travelled to Schiphol with some fellow students and lecturers to pick up American and Canadian students. He would accompany them as a buddy during their term in the Netherlands. One of the students was Lexi Elgersma. Today, Gerald and Lexi have been married for nine years and after some (international) migrations they now live in Capelle aan den IJssel.

The table is covered with exams from the International School in Hilversum. Tests that Lexi will have to mark after the interview. Both Gerald and Lexi work at an international school, no surprise given their shared history.

Extra challenge

Gerald and Lexi look back on their time at Viaa with great pleasure. Gerald states: "I was in college for my teachers' training, and I was looking for an extra challenge besides my

studies. So, I did all kinds of PR jobs for Viaa. When they were looking for buddies for international students, I signed up too." For Lexi, it was an experience that changed her life. "In the Netherlands I discovered what I wanted to do with my life. In Zwolle, I had to take care of my own affairs and for the first time I experienced that I was in charge myself. But that didn't happen by itself; during my first week in Zwolle, I felt quite lost."

Friendship

The best remedy for feeling lost appears to be friendship. Strong ties with the Dutch students developed soon. The students participated in many activities together, in addition to their study programmes. They went on city trips and to soccer matches of PEC Zwolle and the Dutch national team. "The fact that Viaa's teachers came along to such activities really helped in getting to know the Netherlands. They wanted to get to know us out of sincere interest.

‘In Zwolle I had to take care
of my own affairs and for the
first time I experienced that
I was in charge myself’

And at the same time, they opened our eyes to Dutch culture,” Lexi says. Although she spent a lot of time with Gerald and the other Dutch students, her host family also played a vital role in getting used to her new environment. “Thanks to my hosts, the Loonstra family, I started to feel at home in Zwolle.”


Hurricane Matthew

Towards the end of her stay in the Netherlands, the relation between Gerald and Lexi developed into more than just friendship. Gerald decided to do his final internship at a primary school in Lexi’s hometown in the United States. He arranged his internship in Sioux Center and started his adventure abroad in 2012. After getting married, Gerald and Lexi would live and work in America for a few of years, until they are asked to do missionary work in Haiti in 2016. A valuable yet intense period, in which they experienced personally how Hurricane Matthew destroyed life over there.

From buddies to colleagues

After the necessary reconstruction work in Haiti, a new period began - in the Netherlands. Coincidentally, Gerald found a new job in Rotterdam through Paul Alberts, one of the American students who stayed in the Netherlands after his time at Viaa. They went from being buddies to colleagues!

‘In the Netherlands
I discovered what
I wanted to do
with my life’

A middle-aged man with short brown hair and a friendly smile is standing on a balcony. He is wearing a grey suit jacket, a light blue dress shirt, and a blue and white striped tie. His hands are clasped together and resting on a white metal railing. In the background, there is a staircase with green metal railings and wooden handrails. A potted plant with green leaves is visible on the left side of the frame.

'As a nurse you learn to have
an eye for the person behind
the patient'

Research group Healthcare and Spirituality aims at interaction between research, education and the professional field

Since June 2021 Viaa's research group Healthcare and Spirituality has a new lecturer when Bart Cusveller succeeded René van Leeuwen. It is a role that suits Bart well. "Even during my Nursing training, I would wonder: Now what did I learn about my profession in combination with my worldview?"

Bart studied Nursing at the CHE (Ede Christian University of Applied Sciences) followed by Philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He worked as a research assistant at a centre for medical ethics and obtained his PhD at Leiden University with a philosophical thesis on the relationship between worldview and healthcare in Nursing.

Overcoming reserve

The research group that Bart leads contributes to the development of people-oriented care in the professional field and education. This theme forms a perfect match with the Neuman Systems Model, the people-oriented view that Viaa teaches their nurses from the start of their training. Bart explains: "As a nurse, you learn to see the person behind their physical or mental problems. By asking the right kind of questions, you can connect with patients at this people level. But this calls for a sensitive attitude in a care provider. Care providers need to overcome their reserve, as this is often about vulnerable issues."

Person behind the patient

"And yet; when you have the courage to sit down with a patient who had a leg amputation and ask: 'How do you feel about this?' See, that is about having an eye for the person behind the patient!" Experiencing a life event yourself helps you levelling such barriers Bart claims. Think of someone with a serious condition or a loss in your inner circle. Experiences out of your personal context, such as an international internship, may cause you to consider your stand in life and what is important for you. These are important ingredients for providing care in an inspired way.

Interaction

According to Bart the research group Healthcare and Spirituality has passed the pioneering stage: "Led by René we developed what was not yet available: practical research in healthcare focusing on spirituality. This worked out really well. We have established a strong reputation in the professional field and are highly productive." And there are plenty of opportunities to further embed the research, Bart observes. "We will make every effort to bring about a methodical interaction between research, education and the professional field."

EPICC Network

The research group has established good international contacts in countries like Ireland, Wales, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Malta and Canada. Thanks to their strategic partnership in the European EPICC Network* (Enhancing Nurses' and Midwives' Competence in Providing Spiritual Care through Innovative Education and Compassionate Care) Viaa researchers are connected to other researchers in the field of Spirituality. Bart sees opportunities in this area: "I would love for students to connect through this network as well. Discussing your personal spirituality as a student or a nurse is of great value."

Want to know more about EPICC?
Scan the QR-code.



Updated programme makes exchange accessible for more students

Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences adapted its international programme so more partner universities will be able to participate. The updated programme has been shaped in close consultation with both current and new partners and will make it possible for more international students to participate in an exchange.

Bram Suithoff (44) has been involved with the International Office (IO) as a coordinator and a contact person for international partners since 2012. “We want our unique programme to be available to more international students from different countries. That is why we have recently contacted both our current and our new international partners. Our question to them was: What should an international programme look like to be interesting for your university and your students? We listened carefully, to get a clear picture of those wishes.” According to Bram, this research provided valuable information. Viaa used the input to come up with a new programme that is interesting for a larger and more diverse group of international students.

High quality and flexibility

“We are very happy with our partners. We are committed to a good cooperation. And our partners are pleased with the collaboration with Viaa. This is mainly thanks to the high quality of our education and to the fact that we at Viaa have a flexible mentality”, says Bram. This flexibility appears to be key to arriving at a programme that ties in well with the teaching at other universities. “The curricula of universities differ, and we have taken that as a starting point. Our new programme makes it possible for a student from one university to start at a later moment than a student from another university, without missing parts of the programme”, Bram explains. Viaa is involved with both current and new partners. The International Office colleagues received compliments from various sides for the fast and flexible way in which Viaa was able to build a programme that matches the wishes of partner universities so well.

Physically and online

In short, the programme is characterised by a head, body, and tail. The head and tail are hybrid: students can follow these parts either in a classroom (at Viaa) or online. The body, the core programme, is offered physically, at Viaa. “In the new set-up, a student from Germany who cannot join until later, can already follow online lectures at the beginning of the programme. While a fellow student from Canada follows the same start of the programme at Viaa.” In the tail, the student is able to return to his/her home country earlier, while s/he is supervised by a Viaa remote tutor during the research phase. Bram: “We have made optimal use of the increased online possibilities in education.”

Interaction in an international context

Interaction in an international context remains the main goal of the exchange programmes. Students learn and lecturers teach in an intercultural way. “Because the context abroad is different from your own country, it is important we continue to test our knowledge and relate it to other cultures. You achieve this by facilitating interaction between students and lecturers from different countries. It enriches our education and that of the universities we work with. Contact with our partners also means that Christians from different continents are in conversation with each other. This impacts on your Christianity”, says Bram. Viaa will implement the updated programme in the coming period in close coordination with the partners and the lecturers involved.

**'We have made
optimal use of the
increased online
possibilities in
education'**





Dordt and Viaa – a long-standing partnership

Leah Zuidema is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Dordt University. Dordt University and Viaa share a long-standing partnership. We asked Leah some questions about this partnership, and we talked about her personal view on the importance of space for internationalisation for students during their studies.

What is the secret of the long-standing partnership between Dordt University and Viaa?

Our shared sense of mission in a Christ-centred approach to higher education has been key to our partnership. We continue to learn from and with one another, so there is mutual benefit.

How would you describe Viaa in a few sentences?

Viaa is a service-oriented university that equips students to work Christianly in the fields of education, social work, nursing, and theology. Viaa is hospitable for international students, offering coursework in English to fit the needs and interests of visiting students in the exchange programme. I've consistently been impressed with the care shown by Viaa staff, who want to ensure that every student has a great experience—not only academically, but also with their host family and with intercultural learning.

Why is it important for students to gain experience abroad during their education?

God created beautiful cultural diversity, and we see that consistently from Genesis to Pentecost to the vision in Revelation. God's plan for human flourishing is for us to have unity in Christ, while also celebrating the gifts

He gives through every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. Students who study abroad get to experience this first-hand, in a way that enlarges their Kingdom vision for the rest of their lives!

What is the most important thing you take home from your visits to the Netherlands and more specifically your visit to the exchange programme?

Our Dordt students are well cared for when they visit Viaa! It also helps to understand from first-hand experience some of the notable differences between the Netherlands and the U.S., so that we can show good support and care for Viaa students who spend time in exchange with us at Dordt University.

Which experience abroad has stayed with you the most?

As someone whose ancestors emigrated from the Netherlands to the U.S. in the late 1800's, it is fascinating to see how many similarities remain across generations, including the innovative, can-do (optimistic) spirit of the people. One special memory was visiting the home of a family who hosted our daughter for 6 weeks while she was in high school. It was a blessing to meet the people who cared so well for her, and great fun to have more understanding about their daily lives.

How do you view the partnership between Dordt and Viaa in the future?

Our hiatus due to Covid gave time to think creatively about how to keep improving our partnership and the learning experiences that we provide for students. I'm excited about the possibilities ahead for student learning as well as for collaboration among our faculty and staff.



Teacher in Europe

From April 20-22, student-teachers from all over Europe came to Zwolle to learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals and how to put them in practice in the classroom. The students went on a tour through Zwolle and followed different workshops. Read more on page 19 The yearly conference was hosted by Viaa, KPZ and Utrecht Universities of Applied Sciences. The next edition will be held on April 24-26, 2023.



International Conference 'Resident Aliens'

Many Christian leaders ask: how can I – or can my church – contribute to the common good in my country? This recurring theme in international contacts of Viaa, Christian mission organisation DVN and Theological University Kampen|Utrecht is the main reason for these institutions to co-organise an annual conference for 25 pastors from all over the world. The conference took place from 28 September - 11 October.



Visit EHA India

On February 10 and 11, Annie, a teacher and nurse at the Emmanuel Hospital Association in Northern India, together with her husband Robert visited Viaa. The visit included a lot of inspiring conversations about community building, clinical reasoning, intercultural differences and exchange options for students.



Visit to Evangelische Hochschule Ludwigsburg

In May 2022, colleagues from different departments at Viaa visited their partner institution Evangelische Hochschule Ludwigsburg (EHL). The main goals of the visit were teaching the Neuman Systems Model to Nursing students, visiting one of our own students currently studying at EHL and promoting Viaa among EHL students. Colleagues from both EHL and Viaa went on a study visit to a WW2 Memorial Centre in Grafeneck.

Do you want to stay up to date on our latests news?
Follow our socials!



Viaa International



@viaainternationaloffice



Zwolle hotspots

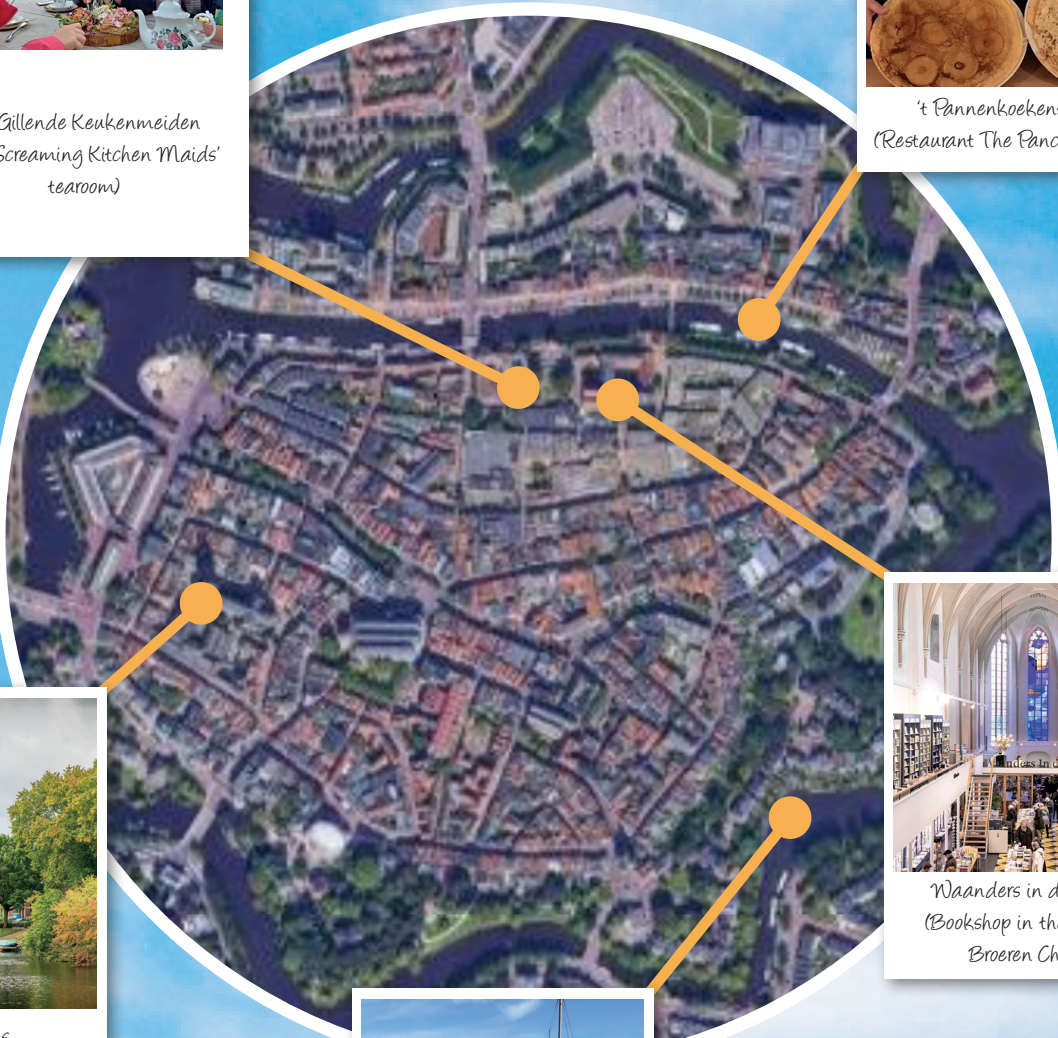
according to international student Stephanie



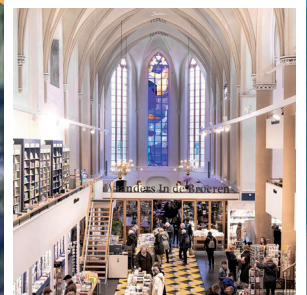
De Gillende Keukenmeiden
(The Screaming Kitchen Maids'
tearoom)



't Pannenkoekenschip
(Restaurant The Pancake Boat)



De Peperbus
(Pepperbox)



Waanders in de Broeren
(Bookshop in the medieval
Broeren Church)



City Canal Zwolle

'The job of the year'

The new assembly hall will become the beating heart of Vaa



A central skylight in the ceiling at ground level, underneath it is a coffee corner with space to meet. Sofas encouraging people to share experiences, study areas with room to work together in small and larger groups. And for those who need this, there are cosy corners to sit alone for a while, shielded by lush greenery and illuminated by lamps shaped like waves – like running water! The new design of Vaa's assembly hall, multimedia library and restaurant is vibrant and encourages connection.

It is quite the transformation Vaa set in motion for its ground floor. Facility manager Bert-Jan Jonker explains: "Education is all about meeting, interaction and creativity. Housing plays a crucial role in this. Offering our students and staff a space that stimulates meaningful encounters is in line with our vision. To achieve this, we have removed all partitions. Instead, we have created an open, transparent environment with space for all kinds of interaction and study situations. There is room to study individually, sit in pairs or work in groups. The renovations started in July 2021 and the ground floor was ready for use in February 2022."

Agora

Renovations; again? Bert-Jan states: "We opted for a renovation in stages. In 2019 we started out by a thorough makeover of the outside and entrance of the building. This has been mainly an investment in bricks and in sustainability. With the renovation of the ground level, we have entered stage two. This has been an investment in people. After this, we will develop the themes 'working' and 'teaching spaces'. The ground floor is called the 'agora', which is Greek for 'a public open space for assemblies'. In ancient Greece, the agora was a marketplace, a place where social life took place with different functions attached. Likewise, the central part of Vaa's ground level, multimedia library and its restaurant now together form the beating heart of our university. It is a place where knowledge and experience come together and where personal contacts are strengthened. This main function then spreads out to the other parts of the building."

Personal contact

According to the original planning, the transformation would have started in 2020, but due to Covid-19 the renovations had to be postponed. Bert-Jan adds: "We are glad that during the pandemic we were able to use the ground floor to administer tests and to create extra capacity for Nursing practicals. In addition, we could offer a place to work to those students who were unable to work at home. This would not have been possible with the entire hall in scaffolding. Covid also made clear that personal contact is extremely important for students, requiring a welcoming physical space. Renovation in stages allows us to adjust to whatever comes our way and we can adapt the plans if necessary. The quality of our education and the well-being of the students are our starting point."

Multifunctional space

The area where the multimedia library is currently situated will get a makeover as well. Bert-Jan explains: "The multimedia library will become a bright and open space, for students to study and work. The former computer room is added to the multimedia library. The library room will include attractive seating areas, where students can retreat or have brainstorm sessions. The bookcases are low and, like the plants, provide natural boundaries. The open character remains intact, thanks to the glass panels ensuring that sounds are subdued. The assembly hall is situated next to the multimedia centre. This hall can be used for lectures and singing and dancing lessons, as well as meetings such as symposia. This part resembles an amphitheatre, with chairs placed at different levels, enabling a good view of the stage. In conclusion: the ground floor has become a dynamic and multifunctional space, where students can develop in a way that suits them."

Student Alien Mijnheer on the international student conference 'Teacher in Europe'

The international student conference 'Teacher in Europe' took place in Zwolle from Wednesday 20 to Friday 22 April 2022. The conference was organised by Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, KPZ University of Applied Sciences and Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences. The theme of the conference was 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the classroom'. Future teachers primary and secondary education from all over Europe explored the topic, learning from and about each other during the three-days conference. We asked third-year Teachers' Training student Alien Mijnheer about her experiences.

How do you look back on the Teacher In Europe Conference?

It was great fun to meet all kinds of students from Europe. This way you learn about other cultures and educational systems as well. Throughout these three days I got a lot of ideas about how to apply the SDGs in education.

What did your (group) assignment consist of during the conference?

I was in a group with students from Sweden, Spain, and Austria and one more Dutch student. We selected SDGs that appealed to us and discussed those goals in our group. Then we picked the goals and developed a lesson about it. On the final day, each group presented their designed lesson. At the end of the conference, we exchanged these teaching ideas. So, I now have various lessons that I can use with my class.

What is the most important lesson about sustainability you want to apply as a teacher?

In my teaching, I can raise awareness among my students of various problems in the world and the SDGs we have set for these problems. Also, you can make students responsible in the classroom. In my class, for example, we separate waste, the students know why we do this and together they ensure that the rubbish bag is thrown away in the right container.

Which workshop has stuck with you the most?

The workshop on eTwinning stays with me the most. eTwinning is an online platform for schools in Europe. Its advantage is that the platform enables you to get in touch with schools and teachers abroad. Thanks to eTwinning, you can work together across borders!

Want to know more about eTwinning? Scan the QR-code.





‘We have managed to set
up a broad interesting
exchange programme’

After 20 years, Tjalling Oosterhuis bids farewell to Viaa

"I am grateful for colleagues that share my faith. I consider them my brothers and sisters. This also applies to the ones I have met outside the Netherlands." Tjalling Oosterhuis (66) is speaking. At the end of 2022, he will bid farewell to Viaa after 20 years of working as their policy advisor. "I'm going to use my time to be there for people around me, to be a grandfather to my grandchildren and to keep myself busy outdoors."

Tjalling looks back on his long career at Viaa with gratitude. "I am particularly pleased about the increasing recognition for internationalisation of our education. We have managed to set up a broad interesting exchange programme. And we have strengthened the good contacts with our foreign partners."

Optimistic happy-go-lucky

Tjalling grew up in a family that had been living in Indonesia for 10 years. As one of the youngest in his family he didn't live there himself, but this different culture, certain Indonesian words and the photos from that period have always fascinated him. "At Viaa, I have made the best use of my interest in other cultures and how this can enrich you personally." Tjalling knows that his colleagues admire him for how he kindles enthusiasm. He calls himself 'a sometimes naive, yet optimistic happy-go-lucky person'. "I'm not the one to put myself in the limelight. I love doing this job together with others. And like to think in terms of opportunities. That's what we do well at the International Office," Tjalling adds.

An eye for each student

Intercultural learning is a must for students who do not go abroad as well, Tjalling claims. "It helps to broaden your view. When you step outside of your social environment, you will get to know yourself and the other person better. That's why we want every student to be interculturally competent. "Thanks to close cooperation with lecturers, an international English-language course will be scheduled for all Viaa programmes. The number of Viaa's international partners has grown considerably in recent years as a result of intensive relationship management. Tjalling wishes for Viaa to have an eye for each individual student. Tjalling states: "Viaa is extremely good at this. The interpersonal contact, how teachers relate to students. I've seen many young professionals grow in self-confidence, only to see them go out into the world. That's so great. Each colleague at Viaa contributes to this in their own way. When students tell me about their international experience and I see how they have matured and developed, I feel grateful: 'This is what we are doing this for!'"

Beekeeper and grandfather

"I've always been a nature-lover," Tjalling says when asked about his future plans. "I have apprenticed myself to become a beekeeper. It is incredibly fascinating to see how bees work together. I love it! Just like I enjoy being a grandpa. I hope that in the years ahead, my wife and I can play a significant role in the lives of our children and grandchildren and others around us."

'I'm particularly pleased about the increasing recognition for internationalisation of our education'



Marlinde, Tjalling and Megan, together with Erik Janssen (academic coordinator)

International Office: “We see students returning different from how they left”

Over the course of the years, Viaa has given internationalisation an increasingly prominent place within their study programmes. The International Office with Marlinde Liefjijn, Tjalling Oosterhuis and Megan van Abbema plays a vital role together with lecturer and academic coordinator Erik Janssen. Why do they think experience abroad is important for students? And what are their plans for the future?

Increasingly students are broadening their horizons abroad. As the programme and student coordinator at Viaa, Marlinde sees how they benefit from this: “We see students returning different from how they left. And we see visiting foreign students changing here at Viaa. Students experience personal growth after their time abroad. I think it’s great how we can guide them in this process as the International Office. Everything they have learned abroad is their stock-in-trade when they enter the professional field.”

Personal development

This experience is reflected on both a professional level and in the student’s personal development as well, Tjalling says. “A parent of one of our American students asked me after the term: ‘What have you done with my son? He is growing so mature!’ At moments like this I can’t hide smiling: it’s great that our programme at Viaa has such a learning effect on visiting students.” According to Tjalling, the secret of this learning effect lies in the different context in which students have to find their way. Marlinde agrees: “When you leave your familiar surroundings, you get to know yourself better. That is the start of getting to know each other better. The more we do that, the more understanding there will be in the world. For me, this is actually the best thing about my job: to contribute to this.”

'Everything they have learned abroad is their stock-in-trade when they enter the professional field'

What do you learn abroad as a student?

1. Personal growth: it makes you independent and self-confident.
2. International skills: you learn from travelling and speaking another language.
3. Intercultural skills: you learn from talking about your profession in a different culture without prejudice or judgment.
4. Professional boost: you broaden your professional scope.
5. Meaning: you discover who you are and what the purpose of your life is.

Essential

Viaa maintains close contact with internship institutions and fellow universities around the world. The focus on internationalisation has intensified at Viaa in a short time. Tjalling: "Internationalisation has become essential within the programme. Erik adds: "We have worked hard in recent years to properly embed the international programme in our training policy." For the near future, the colleagues foresee an increase of new partners, as there are great opportunities, within Europe in particular. Additionally, the 'internationalisation at home' programme is in the making for students who cannot go abroad or do not want to. Furthermore, the International Office wants to focus on internal information, so more teachers and students can discover the international possibilities.

Building relationships

Maintaining and expanding relationships with partners abroad is essential to realise the future plans. Tjalling considers himself as a linking pin: "I take care of maintaining our relationships, and together with our partners I investigate additional opportunities. Then, as a team, we incorporate this in our programmes."

Want to know more about the International Office? Scan the QR code to go to our website or send your question via e-mail: internationaloffice@viaa.nl.



History of Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences

Viaa is a university of applied sciences in Zwolle, a city in the Netherlands with approximately 125,000 inhabitants. The university offers various study programmes predominantly on learning to work with people. Viaa has about 1,900 students.

Viaa originated in 1987 from a merger between the Reformed College of Social Studies (GSA) and the Reformed Teachers' Training College for Primary Education (pabo) and was named Reformed University of Applied Sciences (Gereformeerde Hogeschool) until 2014. The GSA started in 1972 with courses in Social Work, Cultural Work, HRM and Residential Work. In 1981, the Higher Professional Training for Nurses (hbo-v) was added. The Reformed pabo was founded in 1950 as a teacher training college for in Enschede named Reformed College of Education (GOO). In the 1960s, the school was located in Amersfoort and in Groningen. In 1984, one location was selected; Zwolle. The pabo found accommodation at Greijdanus College, a reformed secondary school. Only a few years later, the GSA and the pabo merged into the Gereformeerde Hogeschool.

In 1996 the school moved into its current building at the Wethouder Alferinkweg in Zwolle.

Bible as an essential source of inspiration

As from 1 September 2014, the Gereformeerde Hogeschool bears the name Viaa Christian University of Applied Sciences. Viaa's work is rooted in the Word of God. This means that as Christians, students and teachers want to live with the Bible as an essential source of inspiration in class, interaction and supervision.

Quality and supervision

Students appreciate Viaa for its high-quality programmes and their personal supervision. The university and its programmes are ranked among the top in the Netherlands¹.

Energy label A

In the past few years, Viaa's building has been radically renovated. Thanks to these investments, the school now has its own heat storage, hundreds of solar panels, and an energy A-label.

Hogeschool Viaa

¹ National Student Survey 2022: www.studiekeuze123.nl and Keuzegids 2022 hbo: www.keuzegids.nl

Sources

<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viaa>
<https://www.viaa.nl/hogeschool-viaa/>

About Viaa

