University of Groningen

Molly Kidd

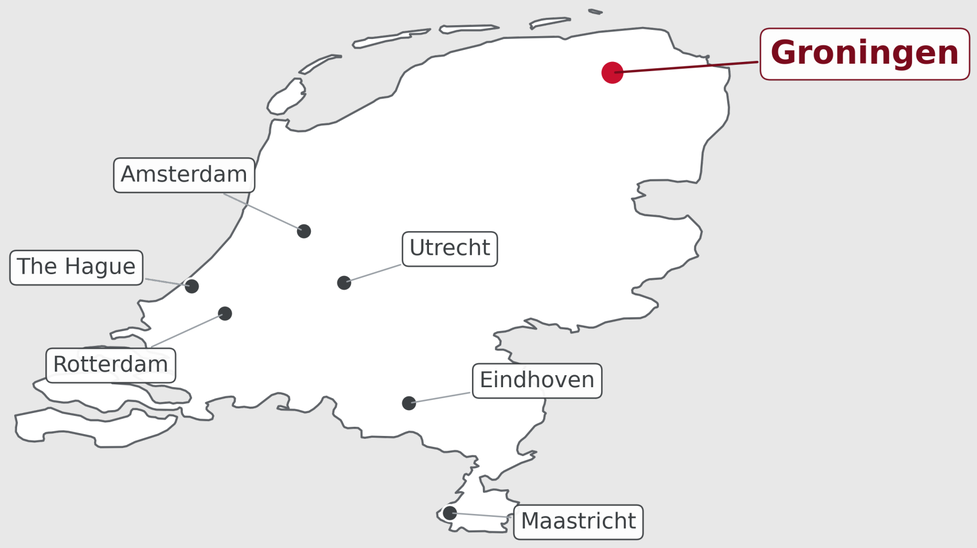
SYA 2025 / 2026

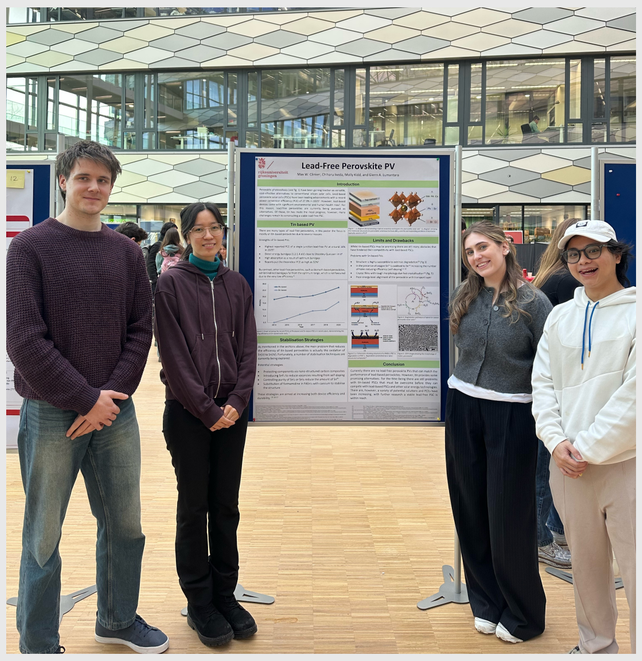


BACKGROUND & HISTORY

- Founded in 1614, the University of Groningen is the 2nd oldest university in the Netherlands, after Leiden.
- Today it has around 32,500 students, over a quarter of whom are international, from more than 120 nationalities[1].
- Ranked 82nd in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings[2].
- Produced 4 Nobel Prize winners – including Ben Feringa (who now has a building at the Zernike campus) who won the 2016 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.
- Alumni and firsts include the first female university student and first female lecturer in the Netherlands, and the first Dutch astronaut.
- Ranked the 3rd happiest city in the EU according to the 2023 European Commission study[3].

The Netherlands







EDUCATION

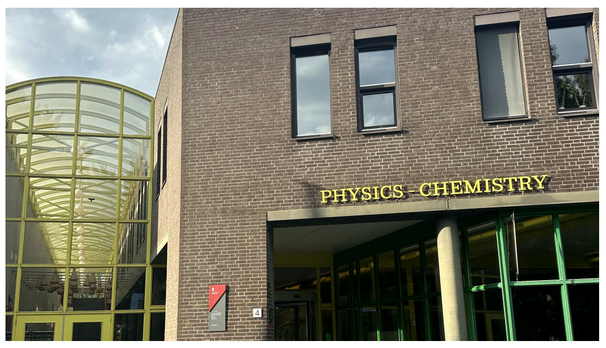
Semester Dates: 2 semesters split into 4 blocks
Block 1: September to November
Block 2: November to January
Block 3: February to April
Block 4: April to July

Studying in Groningen vs Bath:

- Approximately 30 exams across the year
- Teaching split into 2-hour lectures and tutorials
- No cheat sheet permitted
- Course choices kept within the science faculty
- Some courses require prerequisites
- Library closes at midnight during exams and a seat reservation is required
- Lab modules not permitted for BSc courses as an exchange student
- Any exam adjustments must be organised yourself through the Board of Examiners

Block	Courses
Block 1	Calculus 1 (for IEM), Nuclear Energy, Physical Properties of Materials 1
Block 2	Bioinorganic Chemistry, Soft Molecular Materials, Solar Cells
Block 3	Biochemistry, Physical Chemistry, Sustainability Projects
Block 4	Green Chemistry & Photochemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, Spectroscopy

All modules were 5 ECTS – 60 ECTS in total





Exam building – Aletta Jacobs Hall

ACTIVITIES

- ESN (Erasmus Student Network) intro week in August
- Became an ESN leader in the second semester
- KEI week – the city's huge student intro festival
- Kept fit at ACLO and Rocycle (uni sports and spin/pilates classes)
- Free Dutch language lessons, paid for by the university
- Ran the Groningen half marathon
- Became a member of De Chemische Binding – study association for chemistry and chemical engineering students

LIVING IN GRONINGEN

The City

- Known as the liveliest student city in the Netherlands
- Historic centre built around the Martini Tower
- Dutch is the official language, but English is spoken everywhere
- Main transport is by bike – a second-hand Swapfiets is ~ €15/month

Dutch Holidays & Celebrations

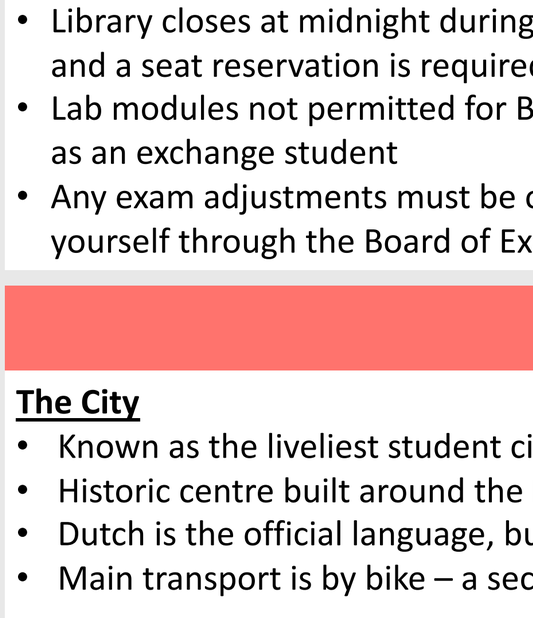
26th April – King's Night (Koningsnacht)
27th April – King's Day (Koningsdag)
5th May – Liberation Day

Accommodation & Practical

- Student accommodation is the easiest way to find housing and make friends – The Social Hub or SSH housing
- Non-EU students need a visa/residence permit
- Register at the municipality on arrival for BSN number
- Cold winters – bring good shoes and warm clothing

Nightlife

- Centred on Grote Markt and Poelestraat
- Free entry and late closing times
- Free festivals throughout the year





MY EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

My study year abroad in Groningen was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Beyond adapting to a new academic system – with its highly structured and independent approach to learning – I gained real independence, made friends from around the world, and immersed myself in Dutch student life. While cycling everywhere, I experienced everything Groningen had to offer. You will fall in love with this city, just like I did. I highly recommend a year abroad in Groningen.

1. University of Groningen - Top 100 University, https://www.rug.nl/?lang=en, (accessed 1 Sept 2026). 2. Times Higher Education, World University Rankings, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings, (accessed 2 Sept 2026). 3. Inforegio - 9 out of 10 people satisfied with city living across Europe according to new Commission report, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/whats-new/newsroom/12-12-2023-9-out-of-10-people-satisfied-with-city-living-across-europe-according-to-new-commission-report_en, (accessed 2 Sept 2026). 4. C. Messier, *Academiegebouw Groningen 1202–1205*, Wikimedia Commons, 2016, CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed 03 Sept 2026). 5. TripAdvisor, "Martinitoren", https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g188572-d1595739-Reviews-Martinitoren-Groningen.html (accessed 03 Sept 2026). 6. Map created using Natural Earth Data.