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# An education to fit your dreams

BY ELIZABETH PICK

What is the career you've always dreamed of? The Netherlands has abundant post-graduate programs (in English) that might help get you there, and reinvent yourself in the process.

In midlife I decided to change my career and went back to graduate school. It was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

### Personal & professional motivations

My decision to switch my profession and begin graduate school did not happen overnight. Throughout my fifteen-year career as a graphic designer and design educator I often wondered what were the educational and professional roads in my life not travelled. At parties someone might ask "If you could have done something completely different with your life, what would you have done?" I would answer that I would have liked to have been a doctor or social worker.

As a graphic designer I worked on a variety of projects ranging from the business sector to the cultural sector. I liked the diversity of assignments and the challenges of working within a specific briefing and budget. However, it was the interactions with my clients that I enjoyed the most. I was satisfied doing design work but found it more inspiring to be able to work with so many interesting people. It was through good collaborations that the best design was always made.

Similarly, working as a senior lecturer with college-age students at the HBO Kunstacademie was very rewarding. I taught most students for their entire academic career and after these years together we were often well acquainted. This rapport meant students often came to me with their personal problems as well as their academic issues. These interactions helped me to define my professional interest in psychology. They also made me become acutely aware of my lack of training when I offered any kind of help or intervention.

### Leap of faith

This was why I decided to return to graduate school at Webster University in Leiden and follow a master's program to become a qualified clinical counselor. At the time my son was 14 months old and my daughter was 10. It was difficult to imagine how I would cope looking after the children and studying at the same time, but I took a leap of faith that it would all work out. My classes were in the evening which meant my husband could take care of the children after his workday. I wrote my papers during my son's naps and did my readings whenever I could find the time. I became very disciplined and began my work well in advance of deadlines knowing that my free time could be usurped by my family at any moment.

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### Practical learning

Graduate school opened the door for me to many new experiences. I was able to study at the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven and followed their program in enhancing reflective parenting. I also worked in The Hague as a visiting professional in the Victims and Witnesses Unit of the International Criminal Court providing psychosocial support to the witnesses before, during and after their testimony.

It was a privilege and an education to work with this unique client population and it broadened my knowledge of culturally sensitive counseling.

Graduate school has prepared me well to give my clients the emotional and psychological support that they need. Now I have my own private practice and see clients with a variety of concerns. Clients may be struggling with depression or anxiety or they might seek counseling to discuss adjusting to life in the Netherlands. Whatever their reasons for seeking counselling, I believe therapy is an experience through which they can build on existing strengths as well as develop new tools for approaching old problems.

### A student at 40

I had many fears about my decision to return to graduate school. I worried about having to start again at the beginning without being able to fall back on my experience. In fact, the opposite is now true. I have a new network, and my previous career only adds to my work as a clinical counselor. My accumulated life experience only enriched my position as a mental health provider.

I was a much better student at 40 years old than I was in my 20s. I was more motivated, more concentrated and more committed to what I was learning. Now I have a satisfying new profession and have realized my wish to have a career centered around helping people. I could not be happier. «

[www.elizabethpick.nl](http://www.elizabethpick.nl)

See What's On page 13 for details about Expatica Education Fair on 1 December.

## Post-grad programmes in the Netherlands

A breadth of post-graduate programmes and courses are available – in English! Here is a small sampling that can get you started on your journey toward that dream career.

### Amsterdam School of the Arts - [www.ahk.nl/en](http://www.ahk.nl/en)

- Masters of Museology; Film; Theatre

### British School in the Netherlands Language Centre – The Hague

[www.britishschool.nl/languagecentre/Pages/CELTATeacherTraining.aspx](http://www.britishschool.nl/languagecentre/Pages/CELTATeacherTraining.aspx)

CELTA Course (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults)

- Selection procedure begins in November 2011 for full-day courses running March – July 2012
- Minimum of 120 course hours required

### Erasmus University Rotterdam - [www.eur.nl](http://www.eur.nl)

- School of Management; Master of Media, Culture & Society; Psychology; or Research Master in Neuroscience

### The Hague University - [www.thehagueuniversity.com](http://www.thehagueuniversity.com)

- Masters of Accounting & Control; Business Administration; European Law & Policy; International Communication Management

### Leiden University - Campus Leiden

[www.en.mastersinleiden.nl](http://www.en.mastersinleiden.nl)

- 11 Master Programmes, each with their own specialties, including Archaeology, Communication, Education, Health, Natural Science, Philosophy, Religion and others.

### Leiden University - Campus The Hague

[www.campusdenhaag.leiden.edu](http://www.campusdenhaag.leiden.edu)

- MSc Political Science; LLM in Law, Public International Law specialisation; MSc in Public Administration

### Maastricht University - [www.maastrichtuniversity.nl](http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl)

- Masters of Psychology or Global Health

### University Utrecht - [www.uu.nl](http://www.uu.nl)

- 100 English-taught Master Programmes

### Vrije University Amsterdam - [www.vu.nl](http://www.vu.nl)

- Masters in Business Administration; Marketing; Comparative Arts & Media Studies

### Webster University - Leiden - [www.webster.nl](http://www.webster.nl)

- Masters in Communications Management; International NGOs; Management & Leadership