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Navigating Policy Change: The Psychological Impact of
the Internationalization in Balance Act on
First-Year International Students

Floor de Boer

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Abstract

Dutch universities have prioritized internationalization in the last two decades, resulting in a sharp increase in international student enrolments. *The Internationalization in Balance Act* (WIB) has been proposed to limit the number of future international students and reduce the use of English as a language of instruction. While future international students will certainly be affected by this law, this thesis explored how awareness and knowledge of this new law may impact international students currently studying in the Netherlands. Therefore, the impact of reading about the WIB on perceptions of inclusion, received kindness, diversity climate, and student wellbeing was examined. Using a between-subjects one-factorial experimental design, 92 international first-year psychology students at the University of Groningen were randomly assigned to either an experimental or a control condition. It was hypothesized that increasing knowledge and salience of the WIB would lead to lower scores on all four dependent variables, with the perceived diversity climate additionally mediating this relationship. The hypotheses were not supported. Surprisingly, participants in the experimental condition reported significantly *higher* levels of perceived inclusion. Moreover, participants showed high awareness of the WIB and recognized the potential consequences for future international students. Nevertheless, high scores were observed across all dependent variables, indicating contentment among international students at the faculty. These findings offer a valuable starting point for research on the impact of the WIB, as it moves from a proposal to implemented and integrated in university policy.

Keywords: internationalization, policy, international students, perceived inclusion, diversity climate, wellbeing

Introduction

Internationalization, defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of higher education (Knight, 2003), has become an important strategic priority of universities in the Netherlands over the last two decades. The University of Groningen (UG) has even been ranked 28th in the World's Most International Universities 2025 by Times Higher Education (University of Groningen, 2025; Times Higher Education, 2025). With that has come a sharp increase in international student enrolments. Currently, approximately 27% of the students at the UG are international students (University of Groningen, 2025).

While this relatively recent development of internationalization has brought many advantages, such as enhanced cultural exchange, global networking and academic innovation, it has also given rise to a number of challenges that have recently come to light. These include pressure on the capacity of the university and student housing (NUFFIC, 2023) as well as the declining use of Dutch as an academic language (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2024). Together with a broader shift in Dutch political discourse, where concerns over migration, public resource allocation and the national identity have become more prominent, these challenges form the foundation for the proposal of the Internationalisation in Balance Act (*Wet Internationalisering in Balans*, henceforth referred to as WIB). This is a legislative measure introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Dutch government in May, 2023. While it is currently still under discussion, it aims to reduce the number of international students at Dutch universities as well as the use of English as a language of instruction¹ (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2024).

How do international students currently studying in the Netherlands perceive the proposed WIB? To what extent are they aware of the policy, and do they interpret it as a signal that they are less welcome or included in Dutch higher education? The present research aims to address these questions by exploring the potential psychological impact of the WIB on first-year international students at the Psychology department of the UG. Specifically, it will be examined whether reading about the WIB

¹ Since the start of this thesis project, the content and timeline of the WIB have evolved. With the fall of the cabinet, the moment of implementation has become somewhat unclear, however, certain changes – particularly regarding language of instruction and programme capacity, have already begun to take effect. Even so, the declining appreciation of internationalisation remains highly relevant.

might influence international students' perceptions of inclusion, experience of kindness, their views of how their faculty addresses cultural differences, and their overall wellbeing as students.

Internationalization in Balance Act

One of the main concerns driving the WIB is the growing quantity of international students at Dutch universities. International student enrollment continues to rise year after year, and relatively few Dutch students pursue a full degree abroad, resulting in an imbalance that has become increasingly difficult to sustain (NUFFIC, 2023). This issue is further amplified by EU regulations, under which students from other EU countries have the right to study for the same tuition fees as Dutch nationals. As a result, a growing share of public funds financed by Dutch taxpayers is being allocated to the education of foreign students, many of whom may not stay in the Netherlands after graduation and therefore will not contribute to its economy (NUFFIC, 2023; Ministerie van Financiën et al., 2019). Furthermore, universities across the Netherlands struggle with capacity issues, especially popular programs such as Psychology, resulting in overcrowded lecture halls and limited classroom space. Consequently, faculty members must manage higher workloads due to a growing student-to-professor ratio (NUFFIC, 2023). This has a direct effect on the quality of education that the university can provide, as there is limited space for individual attention and support to students, which are both essential for high-quality teaching and student success.

Moreover, the national housing shortage in the Netherlands has long led to the demand for student housing to be higher than the supply, which highly impacts the ability of students to find suitable accommodation. The high numbers of international students further contribute to this growing demand for housing (NUFFIC, 2023; Landelijke Monitor Studentenhuisvesting, 2022).

The WIB has been proposed to address these issues. One of the central proposals within the policy is to switch back to the use of Dutch as the primary language of instruction in higher education, particularly in bachelor's programs. The guideline would be that at least two-thirds of ECTS in a program would be required to be taught in Dutch (Raad van State, 2024). This would make Dutch the norm in higher education, and English the exception. To be able to decide which programs can remain in English, the government plans to introduce the *Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs* (TAO), which is an assessment tool to evaluate whether offering a program in a language other than Dutch is justified. This

would depend on factors such as the type of region the program is located as well as its relevance and uniqueness to the international labor market (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2024; Raad van State, 2024).

In addition to language-related measures, the WIB also aims to better manage student intake. Therefore, measures include the introduction of restrictions on student enrolment in English-taught bachelor's programs and a maximum number of non-European Economic Area (non-EEA) students allowed per program (Raad van State, 2024).

Inclusion of international students

The WIB will clearly impact international students that are interested in studying abroad in the Netherlands in the future. However, it might also affect those that are already studying here. The proposal of such a policy might be interpreted by current international students as a signal that they are less welcome or included. Therefore, it is important to understand dynamics of inclusion.

Experiencing inclusion is a basic need for all humans (Correl & Park, 2005), and essential for maintaining good well-being. The individual psychological experience of inclusion is, based on the definition by Jansen et al. (2014) that complemented the definition by Shore et al. (2011), defined as the extent to which individuals experience treatment from the group that satisfies their need for belongingness and authenticity. Inclusion is considered a two-dimensional concept; when individuals receive signals from a group that they belong as well as that they have the room to be authentically themselves, they feel included. Thus, importantly, it is the group that includes the individual, rather than that the individual connects themselves to the group. Therefore, inclusion does not happen automatically (Jansen et al., 2014). The perception of inclusion by the individual is determined by the signals that the individual receives from the group. These signals determine how individuals interpret their social position and the degree to which they are valued within the group (Jansen et al., 2014; Ellemers & Jetten, 2013).

Having positive social experiences within one's environment is crucial for perceiving inclusion. The experience of kindness functions as such a signal. According to Estrada et al., (2018), kindness is defined as an action that results in the affirmation of the dignity of the recipient of the kind act. Through acts of kindness, individuals communicate respect for another person's worth and identity (Estrada &

Hosoda, 2023). In this way, kindness may act as a social signal of inclusion. The moment that a person experiences an act of kindness, they may experience acceptance of their identity and generally feel more included. In line with this idea, a study by Cena et al. (2021) has shown that when international students experience friendliness from locals, it positively impacts their sense of belonging.

These dynamics of inclusion are particularly relevant for first-year international students, who are not just new to the university context, but also to the cultural context. Therefore, international students often begin their university journey from a more vulnerable social position than domestic students (Tavares, 2021; McGarvey et al., 2015; McGhie, 2016) and can be considered a minority group within the university. Thus, they may be especially prone to experience uncertainty about the extent to which they belong and can show their authentic selves. Thus, receiving positive signals of inclusion can be considered crucial for the well-being of international students. As such, the approach that the university takes to the vulnerable position of this minority group, which can be understood as the diversity ideology that the university communicates, is important (Tavares, 2021). This approach functions as a signal that impacts their sense of inclusion.

The diversity approach of the UG

Accompanied by their focus on internationalization, the UG has adopted a multicultural approach to diversity over the last years. This approach is characterized by an emphasis on differences between cultural groups, which are acknowledged and recognized as beneficial for work processes (Jansen et al., 2015; Stevens et al., 2008; Cox, 1991). Research has shown that the perceived diversity approach of an organization has a significant impact on how members of that organization, and particularly minority group members, feel (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Specifically, it has been shown that the multicultural approach leads to higher levels of perceived inclusion (Jansen et al., 2015). Furthermore, this type of diversity approach has broader social benefits, as it increases levels of overall social tolerance and lowers levels of prejudice toward minority groups (Karafantis et al., 2010; Neville et al., 1996).

The proposed Internationalisation in Balance Act (WIB) may be a threat to this inclusive, multicultural approach of the UG. Even though the WIB aims to solve structural issues, it potentially carries a symbolic message about who belongs within the Dutch higher education system. By reinforcing

the norms and identity of the majority group (the Dutch students) through a language shift and student intake restrictions, it could signal to international students that their presence is conditional and less desirable. Additionally, there could be increased pressure to assimilate to Dutch cultural norms and language. Therefore, the WIB could threaten both elements of inclusion; belongingness and authenticity.

Just as the WIB may directly threaten the UG's multicultural approach, it could equally impact the students' perceptions of how their faculty addresses diversity. The extent to which an organization is perceived to value, accept, and support differences among its members, as defined by Harquail and Cox (1993), is referred to as diversity climate. When the diversity climate is perceived positively, for instance; the organization is perceived to approach diversity from a multicultural perspective, members of that organization feel more included, particularly minority group members. Inclusion or wellbeing is then less likely to be threatened by, for example, exclusionary policy shifts. Additionally, in such environments, perceiving another as part of a different subgroup does not necessarily undermine positive relationships among the group members (Jansen et al., 2016; Hofhuis et al., 2012; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Therefore, the perceived diversity climate at the faculty may have a mediating effect on the relationship between the impact of the WIB on perceived inclusion, the experience of kindness and wellbeing. Simultaneously, the WIB could impact the perception of the diversity climate at the faculty directly.

The present study and hypotheses

The purpose of the present research is to answer the question: "How does knowledge and salience of the WIB affect first-year international students' perceptions of inclusion, kindness, diversity climate and student well-being at the University of Groningen?"

An experimental design will be realized, comparing first-year international students who are exposed to information about the WIB to those who are not. We hypothesize that, compared with a control condition, *increased knowledge and salience of the WIB will predict lower-levels of perceived inclusion (H1.1), kindness received (H1.2), positive diversity climate (H1.3) and student well-being (H1.4)*. Furthermore, we hypothesize *a mediating effect of the perception of the diversity climate at the faculty on these relationships (H2)*.

Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited through the student sampling platform SONA. They received 0.5 study credits for their participation. The sample consisted of first-year international Psychology students from the UG. To determine the minimum required sample size, a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power version 3.1.9.1 (Faul et al., 2009). To achieve 80% power for detecting a small to medium effect at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the required sample size was $n = 86$ for a MANOVA.

In total, 114 participants responded to the questionnaire. Out of that number, 21 participants were excluded because they either completed less than 50% of the survey ($n = 14$), were Dutch students ($n = 2$), answered both questions on the attention check wrong ($n = 4$) or showed response bias (extreme answers or flatlining) ($n = 2$). The final sample consisted of 92 participants.

Within the sample, 68 participants identified as female, 22 as male, and 3 preferred another gender identity. Participants were asked to indicate their age within one of five categories: 18-21 years ($n = 74$, 80.4%), 22-24 years ($n = 14$, 15.2%), 25-27 years ($n = 1$, 1.1%), 28-31 years ($n = 2$, 2.2%), 32 or over ($n = 1$, 1.1%). Additionally, participants were asked to indicate the world region associated with their nationality. The majority (87%) identified with regions within Europe, while the remaining participants were spread across a variety of other regions, with no single non-European region strongly represented.

Design

The present study has a between-subjects one-factorial experimental design that was conducted via an online survey on Qualtrics. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (experimental/control). 48 participants were assigned to the experimental condition and 44 to the control condition. In the experimental condition, participants were presented with a text of about 400 words containing information about the WIB, and in the control condition

participants read a text of similar word count about the Numerus Fixus admission policy. This control condition was chosen as it is, similarly, a text about an admission policy, but does not target international students specifically. These texts were written by the researchers. Both texts were formulated in a neutral way, avoiding evaluate statements or reference to potential affective responses. Participants were obliged to stay on the page with the text for at least 60 seconds before they could proceed to the next section of the survey. After reading the text, participants were asked two factual questions about the content of the text, to assess their attentiveness and understanding of the information. To further check the impact of the manipulation, these were followed by three items evaluating how they felt about the respective policy, the perceived impact on themselves and future international students. Following that, there were ten items assessing students' opinion and feelings about the policy. These were included to gain more insight into participants' thoughts about the WIB policy, however, both conditions filled them out to keep the questionnaire of identical length. Next, perceived inclusion, kindness received, diversity climate and student well-being were measured. Finally, participants were asked about their plans for after finishing their degree, and whether they had knowledge of the WIB before participation in the study. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendices A through G.

Procedure

Data for this study was collected in April and May 2025, when participants had been studying at the university for about seven months. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences prior to data collection, through the fast-track procedure.

Upon starting the study, participants were presented with general information about the research, including a description of the procedure, the estimated time commitment and that participants must be international students living in the Netherlands to be eligible. Due to the

design of the study, participants were not informed of the specific research question beforehand (i.e. investigating the psychological impact of the WIB), to avoid influencing their responses. When they started, they were directed to the online questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics, which first showed them the informed consent form (see Appendix A). This clarified that participation was voluntary, data would be treated confidentially, and that withdrawal was possible at any time without negative consequences. After giving consent, participants were asked for demographic background information (age category, gender, region of origin, international/Dutch student²) and were then automatically assigned to one of two experimental conditions. At the end of the survey, participants received a debriefing in which the true purpose of the study and the different experimental conditions were explained (see Appendix G).

Participants were provided with the researcher's contact information before and after the study in case they had questions or wished to receive a summary of the study's results after it was completed. Any personal identifiers, such as SONA ID numbers used for credit allocation, were permanently deleted after data collection to guarantee anonymity and data protection.

Measures

Perceived Inclusion

We measured perceived inclusion using the shortened version of The Perceived Group Inclusion Scale (PGIS) by Jansen et al., (2014). The scale consisted of 6 items, whereby 2 items belonged to the Group Membership subscale, 2 to the Group Affection subscale, and 2 to the Authenticity subscale. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with the statements about people at the faculty (fellow students, staff members, etc.) on a 7-point Likert

² This question was only added approximately halfway through data collection as an extra check to ensure only international students were included in the analyses. As a result, responses for this variable are only available for a subset of participants. However, the chances that we missed a substantial number of Dutch students is low as participation in the study was only offered to students in the English bachelor-track, where a small number of Dutch students study. Furthermore, based on the data that we did obtain, only 2 out of 55 participants were Dutch students, this can be considered as a very small percentage.

scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). An example item is “People at the faculty give me the feeling that I belong”. The internal consistency of this scale was high ($\alpha = .89$).

Kindness Received

To measure the experience of kindness received from other people at the faculty (fellow students, staff members, etc.), we used 6 out of 10 items of the Kindness Received Measure (Hosoda & Estrada, 2024). Items in this scale were originally phrased in second person and past tense (e.g. “You were treated fairly”), however, we adapted the items to first person and present tense (e.g. “I am treated fairly”). Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with the items on a 7-point Likert scale. Internal consistency was high ($\alpha = .85$).

Diversity Climate

We measured perceived diversity climate using the Intercultural Group Climate scale, originally generated by Kruithof (2001), retrieved from Luijters et al., (2008). The scale consists of 6 items, which we adapted to fit the context of a university. An example item is “At this faculty, people think positively about cultural differences”. Again, agreement was measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The reliability was acceptable ($\alpha = .73$).

Student Wellbeing

Student wellbeing was measured using two subscales of the *College Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire* (Renshaw & Bolognino, 2020). We used the *Satisfaction with Academics Scale* which consists of 6 items, an example item is: “Overall, my experiences in my classes have been excellent.” Additionally, we used the *School Connectedness Scale*, which also consisted of 6 items. An example item is: “I feel proud of belonging to the University of Groningen.” We decided to change 2 items of this scale, namely: “I feel like a real part of the University of Groningen” and “Other students here like me the way I am” as these are similar to items in the PGIS scale. We replaced them with “I am happy with my life as a student in Groningen” and “As a student in Groningen, I often feel lonely” (which was recoded for

analysis). Internal consistency of this scale was high ($\alpha = .89$). For all items agreement was measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

Control variable

Prior knowledge of the WIB

After data on the main variables was obtained, any prior knowledge that participants had of the WIB was assessed. This was done separately for each condition. As participants in the control condition were not yet exposed to the WIB in the survey, they were first presented with a short introduction. This explained that as students enrolled in an English-taught program at a Dutch university, the WIB is a relevant policy for them. They were then asked whether they had heard of the policy before. If they responded “no”, they were redirected to the end of the survey (the debriefing). If they answered “yes” or “I’m not sure”, they were directed to the next page containing a series of follow-up questions assessing their familiarity with the main measures and goals of the WIB. These items had 6 response options ranging from “not familiar at all” to “very familiar”, including “I’m not sure”. The same structure was used in the experimental condition, with the addition that questions explicitly asked about their familiarity before reading the text they had been shown earlier in the survey. These questions were included because participants’ pre-existing knowledge of the WIB could influence the effectiveness of the manipulation.

Additional Measures

Feelings and opinions about the policy

Following the manipulation check, 10 more questions were asked about how participants perceive the respective policy. These items were designed by the researchers to capture the perceived effectiveness of the policy, the perceived threat and the perceived impact on future international and Dutch students. Agreement was measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

This data regarding the WIB was of primary interest, but the questions were presented to participants in both conditions to ensure the survey remained equal in length.

Future plans

Participants' future academic and career plans were assessed through three items. Firstly, participants were asked whether they intended to pursue further education in the Netherlands after completing their Bachelor's degree. Secondly, they were asked whether they had the aspiration to pursue a career in the Netherlands after graduation. Lastly, they were asked whether they saw themselves living in the Netherlands long-term. Responses were given on a five-point ordinal scale ranging from "no, definitely not" to "yes, definitely".

Results

Analytic Strategy

The present research examined the influence of reading about the WIB (the experimental manipulation) on perceived inclusion, kindness received, diversity climate and student wellbeing. All results were analyzed in SPSS, version 28. To test the manipulation, multiple One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were performed. To test the hypothesis that increased knowledge and salience of the WIB would lower perceived inclusion, kindness received, diversity climate and student wellbeing, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted. In case there was a condition effect on the variable diversity climate, a mediation analysis would be conducted. Assumptions were checked to ensure validity of the results (see Appendix H).

Correlations and descriptives

The mean scores on all four dependent variables were relatively high across the sample, suggesting that students overall felt quite positively. Mean scores on the 7-point scales were all higher than 5. Results are detailed in Table 1.

Intercorrelations between the four dependent variables were all positive, statistically significant, and ranged from moderate to strong. This suggests that these constructs, as expected, are meaningfully related to each other in this sample.

Table 1. Main measures: Means and standard deviations

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Inclusion	5.36	.79
Kindness Received	5.58	.63
Diversity Climate	5.58	.58
Student Wellbeing	5.39	.75

Table 2. Main measures: Pearson correlations (N = 92)

		Perceived Inclusion	Kindness Received	Diversity Climate	Student Wellbeing
Kindness Received	Correlation	.69**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001			
Diversity Climate	Correlation	.31**	.29**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.005		
Student Wellbeing	Correlation	.35**	.47**	.32**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.002	

***.* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Manipulation checks

The assumption of our experimental manipulation was that reading and increasing knowledge about the WIB would be more threatening to international students than reading about the Numerus Fixus admission policy. Separate Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were performed for each item checking the manipulation. For feelings elicited by the two policy texts, the ANOVA showed that the conditions were significantly different $F(1,90) = 77.59, p < .001$. As anticipated and intended, participants in the experimental condition felt significantly

more negatively about the WIB than participants in the control condition did about the Numerus Fixus policy.

Additionally, comparing the perceptions of how future international students would be affected by this policy after reading the text, the ANOVA revealed a significant difference between the conditions $F(1,90) = 101.32, p < .001$. Participants in the experimental condition perceived that future international students would be more negatively affected by the WIB than participants in the control condition did by the Numerus Fixus policy. Thus, this also suggests that the manipulation worked as intended.

Importantly, however, when it came to how much they felt they personally will be affected by the policy, there was only a marginally significant difference between the conditions $F(1,90) = 3.48, p = .065$. The means were overall quite low, but even lower in the experimental condition ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.58$) compared to the control condition ($M = 4.23, SD = 1.39$). This suggests that international students who read about WIB did, other than expected, not feel strongly personally affected, and even less than participants who read about the Numerus Fixus policy.

Hypothesis test

To test hypothesis 1, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of condition on the four dependent variables (perceived inclusion, kindness received, diversity climate and student wellbeing) combined. According to our hypotheses, participants in the experimental condition would report lower levels on all four dependent variables than participants in the control condition. However, the overall multivariate effect was not statistically significant, $F(4, 84) = 1.53, p = .201$, indicating that the condition did not have a significant effect on the dependent variables combined.

While the multivariate analysis did not show a significant difference between the conditions, there was a significant univariate effect of condition on perceived inclusion; $F(1,90)$

= 4.54, $p = .036$. Contrary to what was hypothesized, participants in the experimental condition that read about the WIB reported higher levels of inclusion ($M = 5.52$, $SD = .75$) than those in the control condition who read about the Numerus Fixus policy ($M = 5.18$, $SD = .79$). No significant univariate differences were found for the other dependent variables.

Hypothesis 2, which assumed a mediating effect of diversity climate on the effect of condition on the dependent variables, could not be tested as no condition effect on diversity climate was found; $F(1,90) = .37$, $p = .55$. Therefore, it was concluded that this mediation assumption is not appropriate for the current data.

Additional explorative analyses

The role of prior familiarity with the WIB

To further understand the data, we decided to explore the role of prior familiarity with the WIB policy. The amount of knowledge participants had of the WIB before participating in the study could have influenced the effectiveness of the manipulation. Namely, if familiarity with the WIB was already high among participants, the assumed negative effects of being confronted with information on the WIB would be less probable.

To investigate this, a new binary variable was created. Participants who had answered either ‘no’ ($n = 31$) or ‘I’m not sure’ ($n = 7$) to the question whether they had heard of the WIB before were recoded to 0 (= no prior knowledge), and those who indicated ‘yes’ ($n = 53$) were recoded as 1 (= prior knowledge). Participants that indicated “I’m not sure” but reported having some knowledge ($M > 2$) for the specific measures were excluded ($n = 4$). The final sample consisted of 34 participants with no prior knowledge and 53 participants with prior knowledge. This new variable allowed for comparisons between participants with or without prior exposure to the policy. See Appendix I for a table with the descriptive values per group.

To check if prior knowledge impacts the effect of condition on the dependent variables, a two-way MANOVA was conducted to examine the interaction between the condition effect

and prior knowledge. No interaction between condition and prior knowledge on any of the dependent variables was found (all $F < 1$).

Evaluation of the WIB

To further understand how participants evaluated the WIB, we reviewed responses from participants in the experimental condition, which measured their feelings and opinions after reading about the policy. This data revealed generally negative opinions of the policy. Participants expressed particularly low agreement with the statement that the policy is necessary ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.43$) and that the positive consequences of the policy will outweigh the negatives ones ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.33$). Participants expressed relatively high agreement with the statement that the policy made them feel insecure about their future as a student ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.87$) and the perception of the policy as a threat to their study experience ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.84$). Additionally, high agreement was indicated with the statement that this policy will negatively impact international students ($M = 6.40$, $SD = .68$).

One item in this section of the survey allowed for comparison between the conditions as it was the only item that was not about the specific policy they read, namely, the statement: “I would recommend studying in the Netherlands to future international students”. A one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference between the conditions on this item, $F(1,90) = 25.65$, $p < .01$, with participants in the experimental condition reporting lower intention to do so. This suggests that increasing knowledge and salience of the WIB may have negatively influenced participants’ willingness to recommend studying in the Netherlands to future international students.

Future plans

Descriptive analysis of the items that measured future plans of the participants showed that the majority indicated uncertainty regarding their intention to stay in the Netherlands. A one-way ANOVA on the mean value of these items revealed no significant difference in future

plans between the experimental and control conditions, suggesting that exposure to the policy information did not influence participants' intentions. Furthermore, correlational analyses also showed no significant relationships between future plans and the dependent variables.

In addition to analyzing differences by condition, further correlation analyses were conducted to explore how, in the experimental condition, participants' intention to stay in the Netherlands related to their opinions of the WIB. Results showed that participants with higher intentions to stay in the Netherlands tended to view the policy more negatively. Specifically, participants with higher intention to stay were less likely to believe that the positive consequences of the policy would outweigh the negative ones ($r = -.33$), and more likely to feel insecure about their future as a student ($r = .29$) and believe that the WIB poses a threat to their overall study experience ($r = .34$). Finally, a significant positive correlation was also found for the perceived negative impact of the WIB on international students ($r = .35$). These findings might suggest that international students who are more committed to staying in the Netherlands may feel more personally impacted by the policy and might be more likely to perceive it as a threat to their academic future.

Discussion

The present study examined the psychological impact of reading about the WIB, a policy aimed at reducing the number of future international students in the Netherlands, on perceptions of inclusion, kindness received, positive diversity climate and student well-being of first-year international psychology students. The underlying assumption in this research is that the proposal and implementation of the WIB might be perceived by current international students as a signal of exclusion and might negatively impact their experience at the faculty.

An experimental design with two conditions was used to compare the impact of increasing knowledge and salience of the WIB. We hypothesized that increased knowledge and salience of the WIB would lead to lower levels of perceived inclusion (*H1.1*), kindness received

(*H1.2*), a positive diversity climate (*H1.3*), and student well-being (*H1.4*). Additionally, we hypothesized that the perceived diversity climate within the faculty would mediate the relationship between enhancing salience of the WIB and these outcomes (*H2*).

Our findings did not support any of these hypotheses. For three of the four dependent variables, no significant differences between the conditions were found. Moreover, opposite to what was predicted in hypothesis 1.1, participants in the experimental condition reported higher levels of inclusion than participants in the control condition. At the same time, the data from all dependent variables revealed scores on the high end of the scale, which suggests that students in the sample feel included, experience kindness, perceive the university to value diversity and report a high level of wellbeing as students.

The findings of the present study give rise to two critical questions. First, why did exposure to the WIB not result in any significantly lower levels of perceived kindness, diversity climate or student wellbeing? Second, why were the results for perceived inclusion even opposite to what we hypothesized?

Firstly, the lack of support for the hypotheses could be due to the unexpectedly high level of prior knowledge that the participants had of the WIB. Our experimental manipulation was designed around the assumption that first-year international students would have limited awareness of the policy and therefore exposing them to it would increase the salience of its implications. While the manipulation check showed the intended difference in elicited feelings between the conditions that we anticipated (i.e., more negative feelings associated with the experimental condition), it is still possible that the manipulation was weakened due to the prior familiarity. If the participants already had formed an opinion about the policy before participating, our manipulation may not have added meaningful new information or changed how they interpreted their environment.

Secondly, data suggests that participants in the experimental condition did not feel personally affected by the WIB. This could potentially be partly attributed to the high number of EU-students compared to non-EU students in the sample, as the policy includes certain measures specifically aimed at non-EU students, which may make it more relevant or potentially threatening for that group. Additionally, data also showed that participants were generally negative about the policy and recognized the potential impact that it could have, however, they perceived those consequences as applying more to future international students than to themselves. This element of personal relevance may explain why exposure to the WIB did not lead to lower reported levels on the dependent variables measured. As some of the intended differences were indeed found on the additional variables, and these findings were mostly related to future international students, this may suggest that the insignificant findings could be attributed to the fact that the WIB has not yet been implemented.

Lastly, it is important to note that the high scores on the dependent variables suggest that the students overall have high wellbeing and experience their faculty as a supportive academic and social environment. This is a very positive outcome as it likely suggests that current international students at the psychology department do not appear to be heavily burdened by the WIB, despite being aware of the policy.

The unexpected finding that perceived inclusion was higher among participants that were exposed to the WIB requires careful reflection. While we can only speculate about the reasons behind this result, a plausible explanation relates to the broader societal response to the WIB. Since the policy has been proposed, it has faced considerable public criticism, including protests, critical media coverage and resistance from academic communities (Van Heest, 2025). For international students, seeing this type of response to the law could be interpreted as a signal of inclusion (Jansen et al., 2014). It shows that others engage in collective action against the law, which could potentially make them feel valued and view their social position more

positively. This explanation could be further supported by the finding that prior knowledge of the WIB was high; if students already had knowledge of the WIB, they have likely also been exposed to the critical discourse surrounding it. In this way, being exposed to the policy in this research might simultaneously have reminded the participating international students of host society members that are actively advocating for them. This might have reassured them that their presence is valued, which might have led them to feeling more included at the university.

Theoretical and practical implications

The significant intercorrelations between the dependent variables in this study, i.e. perceived inclusion, kindness received, diversity climate and student wellbeing, align with previous research showing that these are meaningfully related constructs (Hosoda & Estrada, 2024, Jansen et al., 2014, Harquail & Cox, 1993). Specifically in the context of international students, who are a minority group in the university environment, these intercorrelations highlight how perceptions of inclusion relate to positive social experiences, the perceived diversity approach of the university and students' overall wellbeing. Additionally, it is important to recognize the relationships between these variables when developing strategies to support international students, particularly in times where the societal support for internationalization is decreasing.

From a practical perspective, the present study gives insight into how the first-year international students are feeling at the faculty. The outcome that the students are feeling content is positive for the UG. Moreover, it suggests that the support given to students through mentoring programs and introductory events is likely effective.

Additionally, findings give insight into how the first-year international students perceive the WIB, suggesting that students are aware of the policy, evaluate it quite negatively, but that this does not significantly impact their experience at the faculty in a negative way. These are important results for the UG, as it is essential to monitor students' perceptions and psychological

responses to such policies, and this knowledge can potentially inform strategies for the university to reinforce a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Strengths, Limitations and Future directions

A strength of the present study is that it was conducted prior to the implementation of the WIB. This offers a rare and valuable opportunity to capture initial perceptions of the policy before it takes effect and might influence the social and institutional environment at the university. In doing so, it documents a baseline understanding of how international students interpret and respond to the proposed policy. This could act as a point of reference for future research on the impact of the WIB, especially as it moves from a proposal to implemented and integrated in university policy. Thus, this study offers a first look at how such a policy, which could significantly change internationalization at Dutch universities, might affect international students.

Another strength is the high ecological validity of the study. The policy texts used in the experimental condition are real policies that are currently in use (Numerus Fixus) or under political debate (WIB), and therefore apply to the lived experiences of the participants in our sample. Moreover, having participants read about these policies reflects a realistic scenario, as they are likely to encounter them on news media or university communications. This made the task realistic and similar to how participants would engage with such material outside of a research setting.

Yet, this study is certainly also not without limitations. Most importantly, the chosen control condition might be questionable. We chose a control condition that was intentionally similar to the experimental condition, where both required participants to read a text describing a student admission policy. This decision was based on the assumption that both the WIB as well as the Numerus Fixus are structurally comparable, as the current first-year students have passed both but have successfully gotten accepted into the university program. The key

distinction between them is that the WIB explicitly differentiates between Dutch and international students, whereas the Numerus Fixus does not. However, while methodologically potentially a very clean choice, with a control condition that was not as close to the experimental condition, differences between the conditions might have been larger and clearer. Ideally, a pilot study would have been conducted to test the suitability of the chosen control condition, but this was not feasible within the time constraints of the thesis.

Another limitation of the present study that should be addressed is that the sample predominantly consisted of students from European countries. This lack of broader international representation may have influenced the findings. The WIB distinguishes between EU and non-EU students, implementing measures that specifically apply to non-EU students. As a result, the policy may be perceived as more threatening or exclusionary by non-EU students, potentially leading to different psychological responses. However, due to the limited number of non-EU students in the present sample, it was not possible to investigate these potential differences. For a future study, it would be valuable to try to approach a more diverse demographic.

Overall, the WIB may contribute to a shifting appreciation of international students within the Dutch higher education system. As this is a process that happens over time, longitudinal research would be particularly valuable to examine whether and how perceptions of exclusion may evolve, particularly following the implementation of the WIB. Fortunately, the current study showed that current international students feel included and kindly treated; however, it is worthwhile to keep monitoring how this develops.

Conclusion

The present study examined the impact of confronting international students at the Psychology department of the University of Groningen with information about the WIB on their perceived inclusion, received kindness, positive diversity climate and student wellbeing.

Findings did not signal any negative effects of being confronted with the WIB on the main dependent variables. While participants were aware of the policy and recognized the potential negative consequences for future international students, they reported having positive social experiences at the faculty and did not indicate being impacted themselves. Although the WIB raises concerns about the future of internationalization in Dutch higher education, the findings offer a reassuring message for the current international students and other stakeholders at the university who try to ensure students' well-being. Yet, as the WIB is still being developed, its future impact is still unclear, and care should be taken to preserve the positive climate international students currently experience.

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Appendix A

Research Information and Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in our study. You have been invited to participate in this research because you are a first-year international student at the University of Groningen. This research is for the Master Thesis of Floor de Boer, supervised by Dr. Sabine Otten.

The aim of this research is to explore how university policies are perceived by students and how they impact student experiences. In particular, we are interested in students' perceptions of inclusion, how they feel that they are treated within the faculty, their overall well-being, and the openness of the faculty environment to cultural differences. As the student population continues to grow and change, it is important to gain a broader understanding how policies influence students' experiences. By gaining insights into students' perspectives, this research can contribute to a better understanding of the university environment. The findings may help universities develop strategies to ensure that all students feel included and supported throughout their academic journey.

Completing this survey will take around 15 minutes. You will be asked to provide demographic background information. Following that, you will be asked to read a short text about a policy. After reading the text, you will be asked to answer questions regarding your opinion on the policy, as well as your perceptions of inclusion, how you feel you are treated at the faculty, your well-being as a student and the faculty environment.

It is very important that you carefully read the full text provided before proceeding to the questions!

Participation in this study is fully voluntary. Therefore, your consent is needed for participation. Please read the following information carefully and decide whether you want to participate in this study. Note that you are not obliged to participate, you can stop at any time or leave questions blank that you do not want to answer. There will be no negative consequences for this.

Your SONA ID will be processed in order to allocate SONA credits for your participation. As soon as all participants have been compensated, SONA ID's will be removed from the data. The data will then be fully anonymous, and you will no longer be able to ask for access to your data nor withdraw your data from the study.

Once data collection is finished and SONA credits have been received by all participants, all personal identifiers will be removed from the data. After that, no personal identifiers will be accessed by any of the researchers. Anonymous data will be stored indefinitely and might be shared with other researchers.

You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by emailing f.m.de.boer.2@student.rug.nl.

Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or about the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: ec-bss@rug.nl.

Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: privacy@rug.nl.

- I have read the information about the research. I have had enough opportunity to ask questions about it.
- I understand what the research is about, what is being asked of me, which consequences participation can have, how my data will be handled, and what my rights as a participant are.
- I understand that participation in the research is voluntary. I myself choose to participate. I can stop participating at any moment. If I stop, I do not need to explain why. Stopping will have no negative consequences for me.

Consent to participate in the research:

- Yes, I consent to participate
- No, I do not consent to participate

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire items

1. What is your age group?
 - ☐ 18 to 21
 - ☐ 22 to 24
 - ☐ 25 to 27
 - ☐ 28 to 31
 - ☐ 32 or over
2. Gender: how do you identify?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ I prefer another gender identity
 - ☐ I prefer not to say
3. With which region is your nationality most closely associated?
 - ☐ Western/Northern Europe
 - ☐ Southern/Eastern Europe
 - ☐ Middle East/North Africa
 - ☐ Sub-Saharan Africa
 - ☐ East & Southeast Asia
 - ☐ Central Asia
 - ☐ North America
 - ☐ Latin America & Caribbean
 - ☐ I prefer not to say
4. Are you a Dutch or an international student?
 - ☐ Dutch student
 - ☐ International student

Appendix C Manipulation

Text shown to participants in the experimental condition

Please read the text below carefully and attentively. Take your time to understand the information before proceeding to the next section.

The Internationalization in Balance Act

In July 2023, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science introduced the Internationalization in Balance Act (Wet Internationalisering in Balans, WIB). This new policy aims to address the significant increase of incoming international students in higher education over the years, by imposing stricter regulations to non-Dutch educational programs. Although still under discussion in the Second Chamber, the policy is expected to take effect on September 1st, 2025. However, students who are already studying in the Netherlands will not be affected by these changes and are guaranteed to be able to complete their studies.

Under the WIB, Dutch will become the primary language in higher education, allowing no more than one-third of a program's ECTS to be taught in English. To offer a program completely in another language than Dutch, institutions must receive approval through an assessment called 'Test Foreign Language Teaching' (Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs, TAO). These measures aim to enhance Dutch language proficiency among both domestic and international students. This will increase international students' access to the Dutch labor market and strengthen their connection to Dutch culture, thereby increasing the chances they will stay after graduation.

The WIB also implies that universities will restrict the number of students who can enroll in English-taught programs, and the number of students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) that universities can admit each year. These measures aim to create a balance between the number of Dutch and international students; currently, the high influx of international students outweighs the relatively low number of Dutch students choosing to pursue a degree abroad. In the future, Dutch students' access to studies at Dutch universities will be prioritized in admission procedures.

The Dutch government introduced the WIB in response to increasing pressure on the capacity of universities. Years of successful efforts to internationalize and attract students from abroad have led to many faculties becoming overcrowded, with a shortage of classrooms and overfull lecture halls. Additionally, faculty members face heavier workloads due to a growing student-to-professor ratio. This makes it harder for universities to maintain the desired quality of education.

Moreover, the national housing shortage makes it difficult for students to find suitable accommodation. By regulating the numbers of incoming international students, the WIB aims to reduce pressure on the housing market and help stabilize the demand for student housing. Lastly, the policy aims to preserve Dutch as a relevant language in academic settings.

Manipulation check items

Which of the following measures is not included in the WIB?

- No more than one-third of a program's ECTS will be allowed to be taught in English
- The number of students who can enroll in English-taught programs will be restricted

- Institutions must provide free Dutch language courses to international students

What is the name of the assessment that institutions must pass to offer a program entirely in a language other than Dutch?

- Language Policy Assessment (Taal Beleid Onderzoek, TBO)
- Test Foreign Language Teaching (Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs, TAO)
- Foreign Instruction Review (Buitenlandse Instructie Beoordeling, BIB)

	Very Negativ- ely	Negativel y	Somewhat Negative- ly	Neutral	Somewhat Positively	Positive- ly	Very Positive- ly
In general, how do you feel about the WIB?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In general, how will future international students be affected by the WIB?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Not at all	Very little	Slightly	Moderatel y	Fairly	Strongly	Very Strongly
In general, how strongly will you personally be affected by the WIB?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Text shown to participants in the control condition

Please read the text below carefully and attentively. Take your time to understand the information before proceeding to the next section.

Numerus Fixus policy

In the Netherlands, anyone with the appropriate diploma has a right to admission to higher education. However, some education programs are “Numerus Fixus”, meaning there is a limit on how many students can enroll each year. This is part of the national education policy implemented by the Dutch government. These programs use a selective admission process to determine which students are offered a place, as they receive more applications than they can accommodate.

The admission process for Numerus Fixus programs can follow different methods, depending on how the university chooses to allocate study places. One approach is selection based on a lottery system, where available places are allocated by an unweighted draw; every applicant has an equal chance of being admitted. Another method is selection based on qualitative criteria, where the university assesses how well a student fits the program. This might include taking tests, submitting motivation letters or participation in interviews. After all applicants are assessed, they are ranked, and the available places are offered to the highest-ranking students. A third option is a combination of these two methods. In this case, a part of the available places is offered to applicants who best fit the program, and a part are allocated by

lottery. Alternatively, the university can choose for weighted draw, where students who fit the program better have a higher chance in the lottery.

Students who do not make it through the selection process can try again the following year. However, they may only apply to two Numerus Fixus programs per year.

The Numerus Fixus policy is applied to programs that attract a high number of applicants but have limited capacity due to the available resources, such as faculty size, laboratory space or internship placements. Its intention is to make sure that students in popular programs receive sufficient academic support and access to the essential facilities. Without these restrictions, these programs could become overcrowded, which may affect the quality of the education. The application process may be experienced as stressful by some students due to its competitive and selective nature, as well as the need for thorough preparation. Additionally, there is a possibility that students may be disappointed if they are not accepted into the program they aspire to follow. Ultimately, the policy aims to balance high student demand with available resources, while trying to ensure that sufficiently prepared students enter the program.

Manipulation check items

How many different selection methods are discussed in the text?

- 1
- 2
- 3

How many Numerus Fixus programs can a student apply to per year?

- 1
- 2
- 3

	Very Negativ- ely	Negativel y	Somewhat Negative- ly	Neutral	Somewhat Positively	Positive- ly	Very Positive- ly
In general, how do you feel about the Numerus Fixus policy?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In general, how will future international students be affected by the Numerus Fixus policy?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Not at all	Very little	Slightly	Moderatel y	Fairly	Strongly	Very Strongly
In general, how strongly will you personally be affected by the Numerus Fixus policy?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix D

Feelings and opinions about the policy questionnaire items

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about the policy that you just read.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think the policy is justifiable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think the policy is necessary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe the positive consequences of the policy will outweigh the negative ones	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think this policy will be effective in achieving its goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The policy makes me feel insecure about my future as a student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I perceive the policy as a threat to my study experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think this policy will negatively impact Dutch students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think this policy will negatively impact international students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would recommend studying in the Netherlands to future international students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix E

Questionnaire items of the dependent variables

Perceived inclusion

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

People at the faculty (my fellow students, staff members, etc.)...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...give me the feeling that I belong	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...give me the feeling that I fit in	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...appreciate me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...care about me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...allow me to be who I am	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...encourage me to be authentic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Kindness Received

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about how you are treated by others at the faculty (fellow students, staff members, etc.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My choices are respected	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Others make an effort to understand me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My efforts, thoughtfulness and/or talents are positively recognized	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am treated fairly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My feelings, concerns and experiences are acknowledged as valid	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel free to express my authentic self without being negatively judged	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Diversity Climate

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about the faculty (fellow students, staff members, etc.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
At this faculty, people think positively about cultural differences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At this faculty, cultural differences among people are understood and accepted	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At this faculty, working and collaborating with people from diverse cultural backgrounds is encouraged	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At this faculty, working and collaborating with people from diverse cultural backgrounds is encouraged	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At this faculty, differences in cultural backgrounds are openly discussed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At this faculty, differences in traditions and habits (such as religious practices and celebrations) are taken into account	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The faculty community recognizes the advantages of having people from diverse cultural backgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Student Wellbeing

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I really enjoy my classes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I am happy with my academic major	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall, my experiences in my classes have been excellent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am having a great academic experience at the University of Groningen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am happy with how I've done in my classes so far	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am satisfied with my academic achievement since coming to the University of Groningen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am happy with my life as a student in Groningen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People at this university are friendly to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can really be myself at this university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel proud of belonging to the University of Groningen	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
As a student in Groningen, I often feel lonely	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix F

Prior knowledge of the WIB questionnaire items

Items shown to participants in the experimental condition

Before reading the text, had you already heard of the Internationalization in Balance Act (WIB)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
How often do you encounter/have you encountered discussions about the Internationalization in Balance Act (WIB) in your daily life?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In case participants selected “Yes” or “I’m not sure”, the following items were shown.

	Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Familiar	Very familiar	I'm not sure
The WIB requires at least two-thirds of a program's credits to be taught in Dutch. How familiar were you with this measure before reading the text?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The WIB introduces a non-Dutch language education assessment to determine when a program can be taught in another language. How familiar were you with this measure before reading the text?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The WIB introduces enrollment restrictions for English-taught bachelor's programs. How familiar were you with this measure before reading the text?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The WIB limits the number of non-EEA students admitted to Dutch universities. How familiar were you with this measure before reading the text?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A goal of the WIB is to enhance Dutch language proficiency among both domestic and international students. How familiar were you with this goal before reading the text?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The WIB aims to regulate international student enrollment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

to balance the numbers of Dutch and international students. How familiar were you with this goal before reading the text?						
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Items shown to participants in the experimental condition

You are enrolled in an English-taught program at a Dutch University. In this context, another policy is relevant, namely: the Internationalisation in Balance Act (Wet Internationaliseren in Balans, WIB). This newly introduced law aims to reduce the number of international students in the Netherlands and make Dutch the dominant language in Higher Education in all fields. The following questions are about this new law and your knowledge about it.

Have you heard of the Internationalization in Balance Act (WIB) before?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not sure

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
How often do you encounter/have you encountered discussions about the Internationalization in Balance Act (WIB) in your daily life?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In case participants selected "Yes" or "I'm not sure", the following items were shown.

	Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Familiar	Very familiar	I'm not sure
The WIB requires at least two-thirds of a program's credits to be taught in Dutch. How familiar are you with this measure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The WIB introduces a non-Dutch language education assessment to determine when a program can be taught in another language. How familiar are you with this measure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The WIB introduces enrollment restrictions for English-taught bachelor's programs. How familiar are you with this measure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The WIB limits the number of non-EEA students admitted to Dutch universities. How familiar are you with this measure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A goal of the WIB is to enhance Dutch language proficiency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

among both domestic and international students. How familiar are you with this goal?						
The WIB aims to regulate international student enrollment to balance the numbers of Dutch and international students. How familiar are you with this goal?	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix G

Debrief Statement

Dear Participant,

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation. You participated in a study that is part of the Master's thesis project titled PSY-2425-S-0178, conducted by Floor de Boer and supervised by Dr. Sabine Otten.

This research aimed to examine how reading about the Wet Internationalisering in Balans (WIB), and thereby increasing awareness and salience of the policy, affects students' perceptions of their experiences at the faculty, including feelings of inclusion, how they are treated, the faculty environment, and their overall wellbeing as students.

To study this, we used an experimental design, where participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups:

Experimental group: Read a text about the Wet Internationalisering in Balans (WIB).

Control group: Read a text about Numerus Fixus, a policy on student admission limits.

Both groups answered the same questions about their experiences at the faculty.

Your participation in this study was completely voluntary, and you had the right to stop at any time without giving a reason. If you wish to have your data removed, please contact the researcher as soon as possible.

At this stage, the study is still ongoing, so results are not yet available. However, if you are interested in receiving a summary of the findings once the study is complete, you can contact Floor de Boer at f.m.de.boer.2@student.rug.nl.

Thank You! We appreciate your participation in this study. Your input is valuable in helping us better understand student experiences at the university. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the researcher.

Important! Please click on the red button to save your responses and be redirected back to the SONA platform.

Appendix H MANOVA Assumptions

Assumption of Multivariate Normality

The assumption of normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, for each of the four dependent variables across both conditions. Most variables did not deviate significantly ($p > .05$). However, variables diversity climate and student well-being in the experimental condition showed deviations and were not normally distributed. Values indicated moderate and mild left skew, respectively. Visual inspection of Q-Q plots confirmed that these distributions were not severely non-normal (see Figure 1 and 2). Moreover, considering the relatively large and balanced sample sizes as well as the robustness of MANOVA to moderate deviations, the analysis proceeded as planned.

Figure 1.

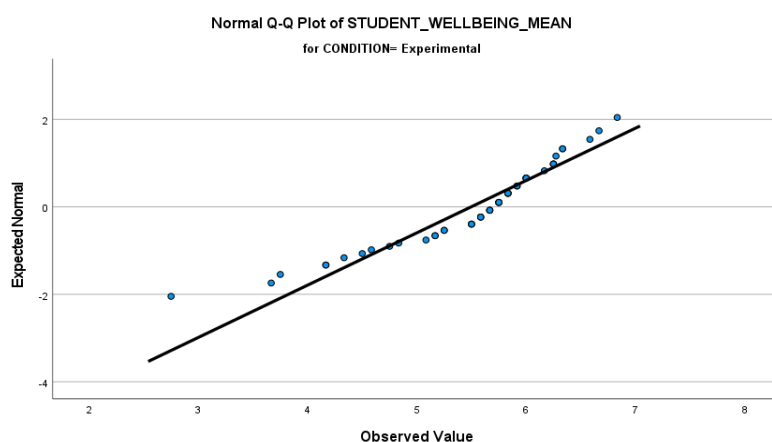
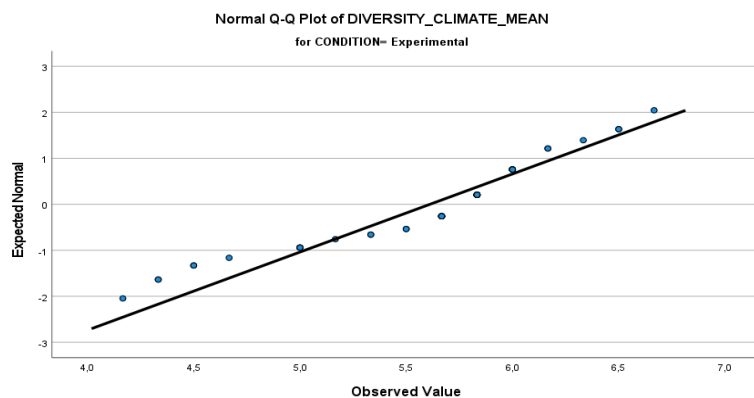


Figure 2.



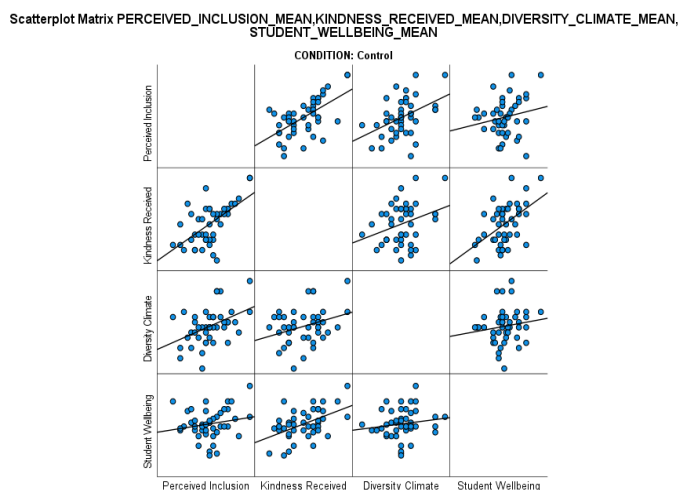
Assumption of linearity between dependent variables

To assess the assumption of linear relationships among the dependent variables, scatterplot matrices were generated separately for each condition. In the experimental group, relationships between all variable pairs appeared approximately linear, with no clear curvilinear patterns or heteroscedasticity. In the control condition, some relationships were weaker and more dispersed, particularly the combinations with student wellbeing, suggesting less consistent linearity. However, no substantial deviations from linearity were observed in either group, supporting the suitability of MANOVA for the data.

Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices

To assess the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices, a Box's M test was conducted. The test was not significant, Box's $M = 19.16$, $F(10, 38043.44) = 1.82$, $p = .051$. Therefore, the assumption is considered tenable, and the MANOVA was conducted as planned.

Assumption of multicollinearity

Multicollinearity among the dependent variables was assessed by conducting linear regression diagnostics. All VIF values were below 4, indicating no concerns with multicollinearity.

Appendix I
Means and standard deviations per group

	Condition	Prior knowledge	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Perceived Inclusion	Control	0	5,30	,77	20
		1	5,12	,87	20
	Experimental	0	5,37	,92	14
		1	5,58	,68	33
Kindness Received	Control	0	5,49	,62	20
		1	5,53	,74	20
	Experimental	0	5,50	,63	14
		1	5,68	,59	33
Diversity Climate	Control	0	5,46	,47	20
		1	5,69	,61	20
	Experimental	0	5,58	,55	14
		1	5,66	,58	33
Student Wellbeing	Control	0	5,35	,58	20
		1	5,24	,70	20
	Experimental	0	5,52	,97	14
		1	5,51	,79	33