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**Abstract**

This article researches excellence in higher education by looking into honours programmes (HPs) in Dutch higher education. HPs are selective and aimed at excellent students, offering them a more challenging, often extracurricular study experience. Based on a survey (n=259) at Dutch universities, our study identifies three types of honours students: above-average ability, task-committed and creative. We asked each group what their ideal HP looks like. The above-average students demand a highly selective and small-scale HP that admits only the brightest students. Moreover, they prefer an HP that is isolated from regular study programmes. Task-committed students are interested in discipline-centred HPs that have a student-centred approach. Creative students are interested in a variety of subjects not offered in regular curricula, which often require substantial amounts of extra time and effort. These differences in preferred configurations of HPs have policy implications for universities interested in introducing excellence education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)