

INTERVIEW WITH NAFTHELY MARTIS

Master student Tax Law at Tilburg University, The Netherlands

Would you consider eventually moving back to Curaçao?

Certainly, however, before moving back to Curaçao, my goal is to graduate at Tilburg University with a master's degree in Tax Law. I also would like to have obtained relevant working experience in the Netherlands for one or two years. The completed master's degree in Tax law together with the working experience in The Netherlands will give me a solid professional foundation to move back to Curaçao and start adding value at my future employer.



NAFTHELY MARTIS

Interviewers:

- Jeandrelika Valks
- Ilona Chakoetoe
- Riordan Pandt
Students Tax Law, University of Curaçao.

Why did you choose to study Tax Law in the Netherlands?

While researching which study would be most beneficial to my future career, tax law caught my attention. Firstly, because taxation affects many people directly as well as indirectly and people and organizations need help as tax law can be quite complex. Secondly, I thought the salary and benefits prospects of a tax consultant are very promising.

You completed the B.A.Sc. Tax Law and Economics at the University of Curaçao. What is your opinion and experience on the difference between the bachelor study in Curaçao and your master study in the Netherlands?

Compared to the Netherlands, 'study live was easy' in Curaçao. I lived with my parents and, as a result, I was able to mainly focus on my studies. During classes the teacher was able to explain questions to me in Papiamentu which helped me enormously. Dutch tax law in Tilburg is broader than Curaçao tax law and, consequently, requires more time and effort. Furthermore, a bachelor's degree in applied science is more practical than a master's degree. A master's degree requires more self-study and reading to prepare for classes. In the Netherlands professors expect you to arrive to lectures with questions we can discuss during class, which was new for me.

How did you need to adapt in the Dutch working environment compared to the one in Curaçao? Which of these adjustments added most value to your personal and professional growth so far?

I worked in Curaçao as well as in The Netherlands and in my experience, the work cultures are very different. In the Dutch working culture for instance, 'small talk' is very much appreciated. Job related communication, however, seems to be mostly digital and direct.

On the island, colleagues seem to be more willing to help you if they see you are struggling. In The Netherlands it is expected that you ask for help when you need it. Let me explain with this example: I wanted to impress my manager and as a result I chose to refuse asking for help. Working hard, in my opinion would show my gratefulness for the job opportunity and I definitely did not want to show that I was new and inexperienced. At times when I would get stuck on a project, I was scared to tell anyone. Luckily for me, my manager regularly checked on me and noticed when I had difficulty finishing a project.

What tips will you have for someone who wants to do this profession in the future?

Definitely my advice would be to practice Dutch at an academic level and take courses to improve your language skills and read a lot. Also, prior to turning in your assignments, have someone with solid Dutch language skills perform a review. Also I would definitely recommend networking with people who are working in tax consultancy and advisory, for example through LinkedIn. Challenge yourself and get out of your comfort zone because those are the moments you will learn the most.