On September 11, the UMCG committee for Language and Culture (UCL&C) organized a welcome for newly-arrived first-year medical students from the two English-taught learning communities (LCs).

Students were greeted in the Keuningzaal, where three senior international medical students, Ki-Eun Bae from South Korea, Alexandra Pascenco from Moldavia, and Sara Hone López from Spain shared their experience from when they first came to Groningen and to the UMCG a couple years ago and provided the new students with some practical “what to do” and “what not to do” tips.

Next, we transferred to the main hall for tea, coffee, *lekker* Dutch treats (karnemelk, ranja, stroopwafels) and a chance to get to know each other. The students were “color-coded” with a badge, indicating their LC and whether they were “International” or “Dutch.” All were provided with a few cards with simple conversation topics, such as the weather, food, or pets to help them break the ice when they talk to their new colleagues during the following “speed dates.” For “speed dating,” the students were asked to converse with a person with a different color code from their own. Thus, for instance, a Dutch Molecular Medicine student might have talked with an Italian student from Global Health. Every five to ten minutes the students were asked to strike up a conversation with someone new. Judging from the noise level, everyone enjoyed this chance to network.

Also present in the main hall was our Fortune-teller Gerard Terwisscha, representing the study advisors, available to answer any questions students might have about ways to maximize study success. The coordinators of the learning communities Molecular Medicine (Agata Szperl) and Global Health (Janine de Zeeuw) were also available to provide information about the LCs.

We were very happy that a group of second-year students attended in the capacity of “student ambassadors,” available for any questions the first-year students might want to ask their seniors. Some faculty and members of the UCL&C were there too, ready to answer questions, to offer guidance, or simply to have a nice chat with the new students.

Overall, it proved to be very lively in the hall!

Going back to the lecture hall, the next activity was an interactive discussion of “classroom etiquette.” We tried to answer such questions as: *What can students expect from teachers, and vice-versa?*; *What classroom behavior is expected?* In Groningen, we practice the “two-way teaching”; the students are as great a part of the teaching as are the lecturers. *Should students ask questions?* Yes please! *Is the lecturer all-knowing?* No! Be critical. A lively discussion ensued about grading, which probably takes some getting used to for many international students. Most countries have their own grading systems which are all completely different form the Dutch system. We heard interesting examples from Germany, Denmark and Pakistan which illustrated these striking differences.

Finally, Grazyna Drzazga and Anke van Trigt gave the quiz: “appropriate/inappropriate,” in which the students were shown some animations and video clips about behavior in the Dutch academic context. Using their smartphones, the students had a chance to participate by voting whether these were examples of appropriate or rather inappropriate behavior. Each question was followed by a brief discussion and the students with the highest scores on the quiz were given small prizes.

This wrapped up the morning and the students had to hurry to the Exam Hall on the Zernike campus, where they could take a practice digital test, in order to prepare them for the real thing in 4 weeks’ time!