

HIGHER EDUCATION
IN FLANDERS [belgium]

2007



Ministry of Education and Training
Agency of Higher Education and Adult Education
VLHORA
Flemish Council of Hogescholen
VLIR
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1. FLANDERS IN A NUTSHELL

Flanders is the northern region of Belgium, which in turn is one of the historical kingdoms in Europe. Since 1830 Belgium has been an independent constitutional monarchy. The present King is Albert II.

Belgium has turned into a federation of three communities, each with its own legislative council and government. The Dutch-speaking North is home to the Flemish Community, which covers about 6 million inhabitants, living in Flanders and Brussels. The southern part of Belgium is called Wallonia, where French is spoken. There is also a very small German speaking community on the eastern border.

Unlike the communities, Brussels has a bilingual status (Dutch-French). The capital city – currently known around the world as “the Capital of Europe” – is home to the headquarters of the European Union, NATO and more than 900 international and nongovernmental organisations.

Flanders is an internationally oriented centre of high technology, with micro-electronics, chip development, media technology, biotechnology, product design and genetic engineering as outstanding examples. The Flemish economic network mainly derives its power from the web of innumerable small and medium-sized enterprises often acting as supplier companies.

Many multinational industries have branches in the Flemish region. Almost 70% of the industrial output is for export. Flanders has gateways to the world's oceans in the ports of Antwerpen, Gent, Zeebrugge and Oostende. Airports at Brussel-Zaventem, Antwerpen-Deurne and Oostende carry passengers and goods back and forth to all continents. In Flanders openness, accessibility and efficiency are more than just empty words.

For many centuries Flanders has been an important commercial crossroads. This is reflected in the architecture and atmosphere of cities like Antwerpen, Brugge, Gent, Leuven, Mechelen. Flanders' cultural life covers exhibitions, plays, operas, music festivals, films and other events. Pieter Paul Rubens, Victor Horta, Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, Hugo Claus, Dries Van Noten, Panamarenko and Toots Thielemans are just a few of the well-known artists of the past and present.

Flanders' visiting card

- surface area: 13.522 km² (Belgium 30.528 km²)
- inhabitants: 6.016 million (Belgium 10.396 million)
- population density/km²: 447 (Belgium 342)
 - age structure:
 - children (0-19 y) 16.5%
 - working age (20-64 y) 66.1%
 - senior citizens (65+) 17.4%
- language: Dutch
- universities: 6
- university colleges: 22
- gross regional product/capita: € 28,782.6
- (Belgium € 28,504.0)
- expenditure 2004: € 17.908 billion (43% to education)
- working population: 70.4% employed in services,
 - 28.31% in industry and 1.27% in agriculture
- maritime climate
- the currency is the euro (€)
- information on Flanders: www.flanders.be
- tourist information: www.toerismevlaanderen.be
- time zone: GMT + 1 hour (April-October GMT + 2 hours)

Visa requirements

- before arriving: <http://www.diplomatie.be/en/addresses/abroad/default.asp>
- after arriving: <http://www.diplomatie.be/en/travel/visaLang.asp>

2. HIGHER EDUCATION STRUCTURES

2.1. Bachelor and Master structure

After signing the Bologna Declaration the Flemish Minister of Education started a process to reform the Flemish higher education system. The Flemish Parliament adopted a new Higher Education Act on the 4th of April 2003. The degree structure based on three main cycles constitutes the core of the Act, which introduced this new structure for all programmes in the 2004/05 academic year. For longer programmes, it may last until 2010.

The higher educational system consists of professional Bachelor's degrees and two-tier academic Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Degree structure

Bachelor's degree

- professional bachelor's programmes
- advanced bachelor's programmes
- academic bachelor's programmes

Master's degree

- master's programmes
- advanced master's programmes

PhD degree

Through the mechanism of bridging programmes, holders of professional Bachelor's degrees may have access to Master's programmes.

2.2. Flexible learning paths

Higher education institutions in Flanders operate a full fledged credit system based on ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). Each course stands for minimum 3 credits, with a maximum of 12 courses per 60 credits. One credit represents 25 to 30 hours of a student's workload.

Courses are independent building blocks for which students may enrol according to their own choice and time, taking into account the semestrial system and evaluations. They can opt for a traditional route of circa 60 ECTS credits a year, for a half-time route or for an individual route adjusted to their specific needs. Students can be exempted from course based on credits acquired elsewhere (another program, another institution), and on competencies acquired outside a formal learning context (i.e. prior experiential learning). These competencies are assessed by the institutions.

The student will get a degree after having accumulated all the credits allocated to the courses necessary to acquire all the competences linked to the qualification.

3. DEGREES

3.1. Bachelor's degree

After successfully completing at least 180 ECTS-credits students obtain a Bachelor's degree.

Professional Bachelor's degrees prepare students for specific professions in industry, education, commerce, agriculture, health and rehabilitation, social work, informatics, applied arts or the media. Courses are therefore practice-oriented and include periods of work placement. These degrees are only awarded by the university colleges.

Some university colleges offer profession-oriented specialisation programmes for holders of a professional bachelor's degree. These subsequent bachelor's programmes cover at least 60 ECTS credits.

Academic Bachelor's degrees prepare students for studies at Master's level. These degrees are awarded by universities and some university colleges.

3.2. Master's degree

Master programmes are characterised by the integration of education and research and a Master's dissertation. They cover at least 60 ECTS credits. Depending on the field of study some programmes last longer (e.g. medicine, law, psychology, engineering,...)

Advanced Master programmes are organised at universities, at university colleges in the framework of an association and at postgraduate training institutions. A Master's degree is required for admittance.

3.3. Ph D degree

'Doctor' is the highest level of specialisation in scientific research. It is based on an original research project that takes at least two years, resulting in the public presentation of a doctoral thesis. This degree is only awarded by universities.

3.4. Diploma Supplement

The Flemish Diploma Supplement is made up according to the recommendations of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the European Commission.

It is an important tool to improve the international transparency and fair recognition of qualifications in the European Higher Education Area in 2010.

A Diploma Supplement is awarded to all students regardless their programme. It is free of charge and delivered in Dutch and English.

4. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

4.1. Access to Bachelor programmes

For Bachelor's programmes (both professional and academic) the general admission requirement is the Flemish 'Diploma van secundair onderwijs', the secondary school-leaving certificate.

If a foreign qualification is recognised on the basis of a Flemish decree, a Belgian law, a European directive or an international convention, the holder will have direct access to Bachelor programmes.

Admission may also be granted to students, after individual assessment of their secondary education diploma, if it gives access to higher education in the student's country of origin.

The higher education institution boards are also allowed to admit persons who cannot meet the general admission requirement.

The individual admission decisions take into account:

- humanitarian reasons (e.g. refugees lacking the required documents),
- medical, psychological and social reasons,
- the individual education level of the student assessed by the higher education institution board.

Entry examinations must be passed by any student (Flemish or other) who wants to take up studies in Dentistry, Medicine and Fine Arts.

A number of professional Bachelor degrees give access to subsequent Bachelor programmes (at least 60 ECTS credits). A preliminary examination may be required. The institution board will stipulate which Bachelor degrees give access to these profession-oriented specialisation programmes.

4.2. Access to Master programmes

Academic Bachelor degrees give direct access to Master programmes.

Some Master degrees will give access to advanced Master programmes (at least another 60 ECTS credits), in some cases after a preliminary examination. The institution board will stipulate which Master degrees give access to these specialised & advanced Master programmes.

Professional Bachelor degrees may give access to some Master programmes after a bridging programme. The programme and study load will be determined by the institution board taking into account the individual skills, working experience, qualifications and competences of the student after an evaluation interview.

Foreign higher education degrees give access to Master programmes (including the advanced Master programmes) in case the higher education institution boards consider the foreign higher education degree equivalent to the Flemish higher education degree giving access to the programmes concerned.

4.3. Access to doctoral programmes

Doctoral programmes are open to graduates with a relevant Master's degree, in some cases after a preliminary examination (depending on the study field).

Foreign higher education degrees give access to doctoral programmes in case the university board considers the foreign higher education degree equivalent to a Flemish Master degree. The admission may still depend on a preliminary examination.

5. LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

A considerable number of Master programmes are offered in English and a few in another language.

In principal Dutch is the language of instruction. However, foreign language courses, courses with foreign guest speakers and teachers, internationally oriented courses, courses in the framework of international developing co-operation, courses in the framework of international exchange programmes and courses for groups of foreign students are taught in another language. Course material may be in any language.

For more information on the programmes, please contact the individual higher education institutions (see page 17).

Most institutions require a proof of Dutch language proficiency for the programmes taught in Dutch and a preliminary language test for the programmes taught in another language.

6. RESEARCH

In Flanders a multitude of research projects are carried out at all higher education institutions. Scientific research is often done in international co-operation and/or commissioned by regional and national authorities.

The FWO is Flanders' instrument to support and stimulate fundamental research in the scope of scientific inter-university competition. The FWO efforts to reach that goal by different approaches:

- 1] support for individual researchers
- 2] support for research teams
- 3] support for (inter)national scientific mobility
- 4] participation in European research organisations
- 5] awarding scientific prizes to distinguished researchers

The total budget of FWO Flanders amounts to 118 million euro.

An interesting aid to get an overview of all the scientific research projects is the online IWETO database, www2.vlaanderen.be/ned/sites/weten/

More information on research projects

www.fwo.be

www.ibbt.be

www.imec.be (Interuniversity MicroElectronics Center)

www.itg.be (Tropical Institute Antwerp)

www.iwt.be (Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders)

www.serv.be (Flemish Technology Foundation)

www.vib.be (Institute for Biotechnology)

www.vito.be (Technological Research)

www.vlerick.be

7. ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is the formal recognition of a programme based on a decision of an independent quality assurance agency, the Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO), which verifies whether this programme meets the pre-determined minimal quality requirements.

Accreditation is only one part of the quality assurance system of higher education in Flanders. This quality assurance system consists of three parts: an internal part, an external part and the part where the formal decision is taken.

More information on accreditation and the common accreditation body for higher education programmes in Flanders and the Netherlands can be found on www.nvao.net

The Register of Higher Education contains all detailed information on accredited Bachelor and Master programmes offered in Flanders. If the programme has not been accredited, the programme will be deleted from the Register of Higher Education and the institution cannot grant a recognised degree. www.highereducation.be

8. ASSOCIATIONS

The Higher Education Act also offered the opportunity to establish associations between universities and university colleges. An association is an official entity regulating the cooperation of a university and one or more university colleges. The partners may transfer their powers regarding education, scientific research and social society services to this association.

The associations are:

K.U. Leuven Association

Antwerp University Association

Ghent University Association

Limburg University Association

Brussels University Association

9. LIST OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

9.1. university colleges

Arteveldehogeschool

e-mail international@arteveldehs.be

internet www.arteveldehs.be

Europese Hogeschool Brussel

e-mail ingeborg.vandenbulcke@staf.ehsal.be

internet www.ehsal.be

Erasmushogeschool Brussel

e-mail jean.pierre.roose@ehb.be

internet www.ehb.be

Hogere Zeevaartschool

e-mail patrick.blonde@hzs.be

internet www.hzs.be

Hogeschool Antwerpen

e-mail f.rylant@ha.be

internet www.ha.be

Hogeschool Gent

e-mail kathleen.vanheule@hogent.be

internet www.hogent.be

Hogeschool Groep-T Leuven

e-mail jan.van.maele@groept.be

internet www.groept.be

Hogeschool Sint-Lukas Brussel

e-mail wim.aerts@sintlukasbrussel.be

internet www.sintlukas.be

Hogeschool voor Wetenschap & Kunst

e-mail jdierick@vlekho.wenk.be

internet www.wenk.be

Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen

e-mail international.office@howest.be

internet www.howest.be

Karel de Grote-Hogeschool

e-mail helene.vanbrabant@kdg.be

internet www.kdg.be

Katholieke Hogeschool Brugge-Oostende

e-mail petra.gillis@khbo.be

internet www.khbo.be

Katholieke Hogeschool Kempen

e-mail agnes.dillien@khk.be

internet www.khk.be

Katholieke Hogeschool Leuven

e-mail carina.saelen@khleuven.be

internet www.khleuven.be

Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg

e-mail michael.joris@ad.khlim.be

internet www.khlim.be

Katholieke Hogeschool Mechelen

e-mail stijn.coenen@khm.be

internet www.khm.be

Katholieke Hogeschool Sint-Lieven

e-mail euro@kahosl.be

internet www.kahosl.be

Katholieke Hogeschool Zuid-West-Vlaanderen

e-mail euro-katho@katho.be

internet www.katho.be

Lessius Hogeschool

e-mail wim.schramme@lessius-ho.be

internet www.lessius-ho.be

Plantijnhogeschool

e-mail marleen.matyn@plantijn.be

internet www.plantijn.be

Provinciale Hogeschool Limburg

e-mail isabelle.vanschoonbeek@phlimburg.be

internet www.phlimburg.be

XIOS Hogeschool Limburg

e-mail info@xios.be

internet www.xios.be

9.2. universities

Katholieke Universiteit Brussel

e-mail info@kubrusssel.ac.be

internet www.kubrusssel.ac.be

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

e-mail studyadvice@kuleuven.be

internet www.kuleuven.be/english

Universiteit Antwerpen

e-mail international@ua.ac.be

internet www.ua.ac.be

Universiteit Gent

e-mail acs@ugent.be

internet www.ugent.be

Universiteit Hasselt

e-mail info@uhasselt.be

internet www.uhasselt.be

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

e-mail international.relations@vub.ac.be

internet www.vub.ac.be

transnationale Universiteit Limburg

e-mail jan.broeckmans@uhasselt.be

internet www.tul.edu

9.3. Postgraduate training institutions

Prins Leopold Instituut voor Tropische Geneeskunde

e-mail info@itg.be

internet www.itg.be

Vlerick Leuven-Gent Management School

e-mail info@vlerick.be

internet www.vlerick.be

Useful addresses

NARIC-Vlaanderen

NARIC-Flanders

e-mail naric@vlaanderen.be

internet <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/naric>

VLHORA

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e-mail jan.geens@vlhora.be

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VLIR

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