



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL

Joint degree with

KU LEUVEN

**MASTER OF
SCIENCE IN**

GEO GRAPHY

www.vub.ac.be/geography

**120
ECTS**

2019-2020



WHY VUB?

VUB education creates strong individuals, critical minds and world citizens

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) offers high-quality English-taught programmes, supported by outstanding research. Being a student at VUB means learning in an open atmosphere of tolerance and diversity, as well as growing into an independent and critical-thinking individual.

VUB is a comprehensive university and offers education on student-friendly campuses in the cosmopolitan city of Brussels. At VUB, lecturers and assistants are available and approachable to students. Faculty members are on hand to answer questions and teaching is often done in small groups to ensure close interaction and hands-on experience.

VUB is a dynamic and modern university with almost two centuries of history. We welcome more than 15.000 students, 21% of which are international students from more than 120 different countries.

The basis of our academic success

Vrije Universiteit Brussel was founded on the principle of 'free inquiry' as formulated by the French mathematician and philosopher of science Henri Poincaré (1854-1912):

"Thinking must never submit itself, neither to a dogma, nor to a party, nor to a passion, nor to an interest, nor to a preconceived idea, nor to anything whatsoever, except to the facts themselves, because for it to submit to anything else would be the end of its existence."

Personal development, open-mindedness, a positive and critical attitude and a sense of responsibility are characteristics that you will encounter in everyone at the university: from professors and researchers to students and staff members. It lies at the basis of our academic success.





Unravel complex interactions between man and environment

Geographers are in equal parts natural and social scientists and have specialised knowledge of techniques for analysing complex interactions between man and environment. They make a major contribution to the debate on environmental change, globalisation, and other societal challenges and seek solutions for a more sustainable development of our planet, on both local and global scales.

The Department of Geography at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at KULeuven (both in the top 100 of the QS ranking) have joined forces to offer a highly competitive two-year interuniversity master programme in geography (120 ECTS).

The set-up of the programme, which includes a common core and three research tracks, either focusing on physical geography, social and urban geography, or GIS and spatial modelling, gives you the possibility to match it to your interests and ambitions. The programme offers comprehensive coverage of spatially explicit approaches for analysing social and natural phenomena and how these interact. Hands-on training in the use of qualitative and quantitative geographical research techniques prepares you perfectly for your future career.



MASTER OF SCIENCE IN GEOGRAPHY

Your job? Solving real-world problems!

There is a growing interest in the multidisciplinary approach geographers can offer to solve real-world problems on all spatial scales – from local to global – and a strong demand for competent professionals in the field of geospatial sciences. As a graduate of the interuniversity Master of Geography programme, you can be recruited by public authorities, private companies and research institutions dealing with urban and regional planning, mobility and transportation, tourism, environmental conservation and management or natural risk assessment, as well as by a multitude of providers and users of geodata-based tools and services.

The world is your oyster

As a geography student you are privileged. As the Earth is your study subject, you need to go out there and discover the world so you can truly understand it. Field trips and excursions are a crucial element of your study programme, and allow you to look at the world from either a physical or societal perspective. The departments at both universities have a host of research projects and collaborations from which you can benefit. That means you might spend a few months abroad for fieldwork in the framework of your master thesis (Equatorial Africa, Asia, South-America, European cities, etc.). You can also include a semester in another (European) country in your study programme or do an internship abroad. As you can see, the world is your oyster!

Students as scientists

The offered courses are strongly embedded in the ongoing research programmes of both universities. Through intensive collaboration with members of the different research groups, you will get the opportunity to develop and improve your scientific skills.

VUB and KULeuven: the best of Belgium!

The geography departments of both Vrije Universiteit Brussel and KULeuven continuously develop and maintain innovative and internationally recognised research programmes on fundamental and applied aspects of geosciences, covering a wide range of spatial and temporal scales. Most research programmes are international collaborations, and both departments take part in various international research networks.





PROGRAMME	ECTS
Common core	
Environmental Change	6
Geographies of a Globalizing Europe	6
Geographical Research Methods I: Earth Observation	3
Geographical Research Methods II: Survey and Data Analysis	3
Research Seminar	3
Master's thesis	30
Choose one of three tracks	
Earth and Climate	
Module Earth Surface Processes	15
Module Ice and Atmosphere	15
Choose either Module Development or Module GIS and Earth Observation	15
Electives	21
Physical Geography Field Trip Abroad	3
City, Society and Space	
Module Social and Economic Geography	15
Module Urban Geography	16
Choose either Module Urban Planning or Module Tourism	15
Electives	20
Social and Economic Geography Field Trip Abroad	3
GIS and Spatial Modelling	
Module Geo-information Science	15
Module Geospatial Modelling	15
Choose either Module GIS Internship or Module Space and Policy	15
Electives	21
Field Trip Abroad (Physical or Social/Economic Geography)	3

For the complete overview of all courses, go to www.vub.ac.be/geography

The programme is subject to change.

Check www.vub.ac.be/en for the latest information about the programme.

ECTS (European Credit Transfer System): 1 credit represents 25-30 hours of study activity.

Preparatory programme

It is possible to take up a preparatory programme of up to 12 ECTS instead of electives. Whether a candidate is eligible for such programme will be determined case by case by the programme coordinator.

3 TRACKS

Earth & Climate

In this specialisation you will gain a deep understanding of land surface and atmospheric processes shaping the physical environment and acquire quantitative skills for analysing and modelling the dynamics of these processes. You will also learn to independently define and carry out research projects in geosciences and develop a synthetic vision on environmental issues, at local, regional and global levels.

City, Society & Space

In a strongly urbanised world there is a growing need to better understand social, economic, cultural, and political dynamics of urban areas. The City, Society & Space track focuses on the multifaceted issues that cities are experiencing in the current era of globalisation. During your studies, you will be introduced to key urban social and economic theories and become familiar with critical views of urban development. In the interdisciplinary spirit of urban studies, you will have the chance to engage with and integrate insights from key debates in urban planning and design, housing and real estate markets, tourism and regional development, and much more. You will be trained in qualitative and quantitative research methods that will allow you to analyse contemporary urban dynamics in a synthetic and rigorous way.

GIS & Spatial Modelling

In the GIS & Spatial Modelling track you will become acquainted with new approaches and techniques for acquiring, managing, analysing and mapping spatial data. Based on your skills in spatial data handling and your background in both natural and human sciences, you will be trained in analysing complex interactions between man and environment and in the application of spatial decision-making mechanisms. As an expert in geodata processing and spatial modelling you will get the opportunity to improve your knowledge in important application fields of geo-information science, including natural resource management, spatial planning, mobility and transportation. A big bonus is that you can also opt to include a 2-month GIS internship in your study programme.

YOUNG RESEARCHERS AT WORK

GIS & SPATIAL MODELLING



"A well balanced mix of physical, social sciences and spatial modelling skills is what attracted me to study geography, and this is exactly what I got when I started out at VUB. I chose to specialise in GIS and spatial modelling, yet my master programme allowed me to explore other paths as well. My fields of interest were clearly reflected in the choice of my master thesis which focused on spatial analysis of rural poverty in southwest-Ethiopia, for which I had the opportunity to perform field work in this fascinating country."

Frederik Priem
PhD-student

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY



"Studying at VUB opened my mind and was my introduction to the fascinating world of physical geography. After an unforgettable excursion to the Alps I decided to focus on this region for my master thesis and during my last year I had the opportunity to participate in two fieldwork campaigns on a glacier in Switzerland. The thrill and excitement of working on a glacier made me realise that this was the environment where I belonged and were I wanted to spend the coming years of my life."

Harry Zekollari
PhD-student



URBAN GEOGRAPHY

"Why I decided to study Geography? It is an ideal combination of natural and social sciences, theory and practice. During my studies I discovered what social and urban geography entails, and it turned out it actually combined most of my interests: cities, people and urban renewal. My PhD-research focused on 'urban development projects' in the Brussels Canal Zone. Within 10 years the population of Brussels will have grown with almost a fifth. That means there is a big need for housing, schools, childcare and public space. It is therefore a true challenge to find planning solutions that make optimal use of the space available, both in the short and the long term. In my research I looked at who is currently living in the Canal Zone, the problems and opportunities there are, and how space has been allocated. The second part of my research critically looked into the way politicians, urban designers, spatial planners, real estate investors and citizens arrive at a spatial plan, forming a vision for the future development of the city. In the beginning of my PhD-research I spent a lot of time reading, talking to experts and digging into archives but in the second phase I ventured out every day to my 'lab' – the city itself. I visited all districts to get a feel for the place, to better understand the context and to learn from the people living and working in the Canal Zone."

Sofie Vermeulen, Doctor in Science

ADMISSION CRITERIA

Admission is based on the review of each application: proof of meeting academic and language requirements, personal motivation, etc.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

Prospective students can provide proof of sufficient knowledge of English as language of instruction by meeting one of the following criteria:

- having successfully completed one of the following language proficiency tests:
 - TOEFL: minimum level: 79 for the internet-based test (IBT)
 - IELTS: minimum level academic module 6.5
 - ITACE: minimum level B2
 - Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English (CAE), grade B
 - Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE), grade C
- having successfully completed at least one year of secondary education with English as language of instruction, or having successfully completed secondary school in a Belgian institution;
- having successfully completed programme units in higher education with a minimum of 54 ECTS-credits where English was the language of instruction.

For more details on admission requirements and application: www.vub.ac.be/en/apply

DIRECT ACCESS

Bachelor of Science in Geography
Bachelor of Science in Geography and Geomatics

OTHERS

For other bachelors, admission will be evaluated based on academic records and skills.

Application deadline

Prospective students are advised to apply as soon as possible, even if they have not yet obtained their degree. Applications can only be submitted through our website www.vub.ac.be/en/apply

- Students who require a visa (non-EU/EEA nationals) need to submit their application before **April 1st**.
- Students who do not require a visa must apply before **September 1st**.
- Note: if the proof of English proficiency or APS certificate is not ready before the deadline, you can always submit it later instead of missing the deadline.

Tuition fees

All Flemish universities in Belgium are subsidised by the government, which results in relatively low tuition fees. The general tuition fee for our master programmes is €920/year. Some programmes have higher tuition fee for students with a non EU/EEA nationality. A detailed overview of the tuition fees can be found on:

www.vub.ac.be/en/tuition-fees

Contact

www.vub.ac.be/geography