

**Student Exchange Faculty of Sciences
and Bioengineering Sciences**

Practical Guide

2020-2021



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1. Where can I find information about student exchange?

Every academic year, the Faculty organises an information session about exchange. During this info session we outline the specific exchange possibilities for our faculty. This session usually takes place in November. The presentation is distributed afterwards and is posted on the faculty website (<http://we.vub.ac.be>).

Additionally, VUB organises more general information moments (for example during the Go Abroad Week) for all VUB students. These sessions are often interesting for students interested in exchange, but who cannot leave yet – such as for example BA1-students. On <https://student.vub.be/en/go-abroad> you can also find an overview of all exchange opportunities.

Your exchange coordinator can answer your questions concerning exchange, courses, conversion of grades, etc. The Faculty coordinator can also advise and assist you:

- Biology: Prof. Marc Kochzius (marc.kochzius@vub.be)
- Bioengineering Sciences: Prof. Wim Vranken (wim.vranken@vub.be)
- Chemistry: Prof. Yue Gao (yue.gao@vub.be)
- Computer Science: Prof. Beat Signer (beat.signer@vub.be)
- Physics: Prof. Sophie De Buyl (sophie.de.buyl@vub.be)
- Geography: Prof. Matthieu Kervyn (matthieu.kervyn.de.meerendre@vub.be)
- Urban Studies: Prof. Bas Van Heur (bas.van.heur@vub.be)
- Oceans & Lakes: Ms. Karolien Van Puyvelde (karolien.van.puyvelde@vub.be)
- Urban Design and Spatial Planning: Prof. Fabio Vanin (fabio.vanin@vub.be)
- Mathematics: Prof. Uwe Einmahl (uwe.einmahl@vub.be)
- Faculty Coordinator: Ms. Marjan Maes (marjan.maes@vub.be)

2. How do I apply for student exchange?

Students who wish to take part in an exchange programme, have to submit their application to their exchange coordinator **before March 1st** of the academic year preceding the academic year when the exchange will take place.

The application consists of:

- the location and purpose (traineeship or studies) of the exchange;
- motivation letter

The Study Programme Committee ('Opleidingsraad') decides on the admission or refusal of a student to an exchange programme. In case of a positive decision, your nomination will be forwarded to the International Relations & Mobility Office (IRMO) and you will be invited to officially apply in SOP Mobility Online. You can direct all admin questions to exchange.outgoing@vub.be.

3. I have been selected for student exchange: how do I prepare myself?

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

1. Faculty nomination: the faculty nominates the students to IRMO. The students receive an email with more information.
2. Learning Agreement: you start your application in SOP Mobility Online and fill in your Learning Agreement online after consulting your exchange coordinator.
3. Provisional approval LA: the exchange coordinator checks your Learning Agreement and approves it provisionally in SOP Mobility Online or might request you to still make changes.
4. Nomination host institution: IRMO nominates you at the host institution. As soon as the host institution accepts your nomination, you will be invited to apply there as an exchange student.
5. Final approval: after the exams (first or second session) the faculty will evaluate your file and grant final approval.
6. You receive your departure package, including all mobility grant information.

LEARNING/TRAINEESHIP AGREEMENT

This is the most important document! You will be asked to fill in a template in SOP Mobility Online. It is advised to only fill in your Learning Agreement after consulting with your exchange coordinator, and possibly after a first contact with your host institution.

It is very important to carefully fill in your Learning Agreement, so it is clear which VUB courses you are substituting for which courses at the host institution abroad. In case you exchange electives, you can simply fill in 'elective' on your Learning Agreement. Make sure you use the correct code and title of the courses abroad, as these will appear on your diploma supplement.

Credits will be awarded for each course in accordance with our decree. Marking will be done according to the standards set by the Study Programme Committee.

For all students completing their thesis abroad, the responsibility for the thesis lies with the VUB supervisor. The thesis will be defended at VUB. An exception can be made for interuniversity programmes.

APPLICATION at HOST INSTITUTION

IRMO will nominate you at the host institution of your choice. As soon as your host institution accepts you, you can also start the application procedure there. Usually you will be contacted by your host institution with

instructions. If this is not the case, you should contact the host institution yourself, if necessary with help from your faculty coordinator or exchange coordinator.

INSURANCE and HEALTH

As an exchange student you are still enrolled at VUB, which means you are still insured by us. Check whether you find this insurance sufficient. If necessary, take out extra insurance.

Don't forget to check whether you have the necessary documents from your public health insurance: your electronic ID might not be usable abroad!

Are you doing a traineeship AFTER graduation? This means you are no longer a VUB student during your exchange, and you are thus no longer insured by VUB!

GRANTS

Erasmus+ Mobility Grants are available for exchange for studies and internship. These grants are managed by the International Relations & Mobility Office (IRMO). We cannot guarantee you that you will receive a grant, in case demand is higher than supply. The amount you will receive depends on your destination and whether or not you receive a study allowance from the Flemish Government.

As an indication, for 2018-2019 the following scheme was used:

Group 1: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, United Kingdom, Liechtenstein, Norway.
Scholarship student studies or traineeship: 435 euro / 30 days
Non-scholarship student: studies: 335 euro / 30 days – traineeship: 435 euro / 30 days

Group 2: Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Netherlands, Malta, Portugal.
Scholarship student studies or traineeship: 385 euro / 30 days
Non-scholarship student: studies: 285 euro / 30 days – traineeship: 385 euro / 30 days

Group 3: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey.
Scholarship student studies or traineeship: 335 euro / 30 days
Non-scholarship student: studies: 235 euro / 30 days – traineeship: 335 euro / 30 days

You receive 70% of the amount of the grant at the start of your exchange, on condition that you have filled in and signed your grant agreement. The remaining 30% you will receive after the exchange period, as soon as all administration (second online language test, transcript of records, certificate of arrival and departure) is finalised and your report is submitted.

LANGUAGE

Maybe you decided to go on exchange to a country where you don't speak the language. Even if you plan to follow only courses in English, it is still a good idea to learn the basics of the local language. There is a wide range of possibilities to improve your language skills: a language course at ACTO, an online course, etc. Some host institutions also offer (sometimes obligatory) preparatory language courses for exchange students.

LANGUAGE TEST

Via e-mail you will receive an invitation for an online language test. You need to do the test in the language in which most of your courses will be taught. Tests are available in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian and Dutch.

After your exchange period you will be asked to do a second online language test to measure your progress. You need to complete this test before you can receive the second part of your Erasmus+ Mobility Grant.

TIMING

In some countries the academic calendar is fundamentally different from the VUB calendar. Make sure you check this beforehand!

ACCOMMODATION

Some host institutions offer accommodation for exchange students or help you in your search. In any case, start looking early enough, but keep in mind that your exchange might be cancelled if you do not pass the necessary courses.

TRANSPORT

Don't forget to arrange your transport in time. Especially if you have to take flights, early booking can help to reduce costs. However, keep in mind that your exchange might still be cancelled, if you do not pass the necessary courses.

SOCIAL

Through student networks you can get to know students in your host institution or host country before you arrive there. Take a look at the European Student Network (ESN) or other organisations. You can also become a buddy for incoming students at VUB.

4. What should I do before departure?

Enrolment at VUB: Make sure you re-enrol at VUB. Please note, in the academic year of your exchange, you will not be able to register your courses yourself. Not the VUB-courses mentioned in your LA, nor the ones for which you will take the exam at VUB. Contact the Faculty Secretariat so they can register you for all necessary VUB courses and at the same time link your exchange courses to the appropriate VUB courses. Are you unsure whether you are correctly enrolled and registered at VUB? Contact facwe@vub.be!

5. What to do during your exchange?

First of all, have the experience of a lifetime!

At the start of your exchange period, don't forget to check the following things:

Learning Agreement: you can still make changes upon arrival at the host institution. Make sure to notify your exchange coordinator of the changes and make the necessary changes to your Learning Agreement in SOP Mobility Online. Your changes form should be signed and approved by your host institution and by your VUB exchange coordinator. The deadline for the 1st semester is 15 October, the deadline for the 2nd semester is 28 February.

Please keep in mind that it is only possible to make changes once.

Avoid spelling mistakes in your LA: the exchange courses will be mentioned literally on your diploma supplement. In case you exchange VUB electives, you can simply indicate this as 'elective' in your LA.

Don't forget to regularly check your VUB-mail and send us a message!

6. And afterwards?

After the exams: we will receive an official document with your results (Transcript of Records) from your host institution. As long as we have not received this Transcript, the code 'uitgesteld/postponed' will be mentioned in your overview of results.

You failed an exam at the host institution? The Faculty of Sciences and Bioengineering Sciences prefers you to resit your exam at the host institution. Communicate clearly to your host institution, exchange coordinator and the course titular what you intend to do. If it is impossible to resit your exam at the host institution, you need to make clear arrangements to resit at VUB. It is crucial to discuss the possibilities with your exchange coordinator and the course titular as soon as possible.

Administration: Don't forget to finalise all remaining administration, so you can receive the final 30% of your mobility grant.

Ambassador: You came back with a lot of new impressions, experiences and friends! Write a report about your exchange adventure that can be shared with interested students through the faculty website. Make your fellow students enthusiastic for an experience abroad by testifying during an information session, or become a buddy and help us make incoming exchange students feel welcome.