K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in Belgium

A guide for international students & families — how Belgium's three-community higher education works, the student visa, affordable tuition, English programs, and post-study work.

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT K12 ACADEMICS

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

AFFORDABLE, MULTILINGUAL, AT EUROPE'S HEART

Belgium offers **affordable, high-quality universities** (KU Leuven ranks among the world's top 100), a **multilingual** setting, and a **central-European location** — Brussels is effectively the EU capital. Its education splits across **three language communities**, which shapes everything from tuition to language of study. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Belgium's rules differ by community (Flemish, French, German) and change. The figures here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with the Belgian representation, your community/university, and the immigration authorities**.

1

STEP 01 OF 10

Understand Why Students Choose Belgium

WHAT TO KNOW

Belgium offers **affordable, top-ranked universities (KU Leuven, Ghent, UCLouvain, ULB), a multilingual and international setting, and a central location** — Brussels hosts the EU and NATO, opening doors in policy, business, and NGOs.

BY THE NUMBERS

Top universities	Affordable	EU capital
KU Leuven top 100	vs. many neighbors	Brussels opportunities

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Belgium's **affordability, quality, and central-Europe opportunities** against choosing the right community and language — for many, it's underrated value.

GOOD TO KNOW

Brussels' status as the **EU capital** creates unique internship and career options at EU institutions, NGOs, and multinationals.

2

STEP 02 OF 10

Understand the Three Communities

WHAT TO KNOW

Belgium's education is split across **three language communities**: **Flemish (Dutch)** — KU Leuven, Ghent, VUB, Antwerp; **French** — UCLouvain, ULB, Liège; and the small **German-speaking** community. Each sets its own policies, tuition, and recognition rules.

BY THE NUMBERS

Flemish (Dutch)	French	German
KU Leuven, Ghent	UCLouvain, ULB	small community

HOW TO HELP

Decide which **community and language** fits you — it determines your language of study, tuition, and credential-recognition process — then choose universities within it.

WATCH OUT

The **community** you study in shapes everything — language, fees, and recognition — so pick it deliberately.

3

STEP 03 OF 10

Get the Visa & Residence Permit

WHAT TO KNOW

Non-EU/EEA students staying over 90 days need a **long-stay Type D student visa**, applied for at a Belgian consulate. After arriving, you must **register with your local commune (town hall) within 8 days** to obtain your **residence permit**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Type D visa	Register	Residence permit
long-stay, non-EU	commune within 8 days	after registration

HOW TO HELP

Apply for the **Type D visa** with your acceptance, funds proof, and insurance, then **register with your commune within 8 days** of arrival to get your residence permit.

WATCH OUT

The **8-day commune registration** after arrival is mandatory — do it immediately to secure your residence permit.

4

STEP 04 OF 10

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Applications go **directly to universities**. Depending on your program and community, your prior diploma may need **equivalence/recognition** (via the Flemish or French community's NARIC). Requirements and deadlines are set per program.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly	Equivalence	Per program
to universities	community NARIC	requirements vary

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly to your chosen universities**, arrange **diploma equivalence** through the relevant community where required, and meet each program's deadlines.

GOOD TO KNOW

Diploma **equivalence** is handled by each community — start it early, as it can take time.

5

STEP 05 OF 10

Plan for Tuition & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

Tuition is **relatively affordable** but varies by community and program: EU rates are low; non-EU rates are higher (often €1,000–6,000+/year). Scholarships include **VLIR-UOS** (Flemish, for developing countries), **ARES** (French community), and university awards.

BY THE NUMBERS

EU	Non-EU	Scholarships
low rates	higher, varies	VLIR-UOS, ARES

HOW TO HELP

Budget the **community-specific tuition** plus living costs, and pursue scholarships — **VLIR-UOS** and **ARES** fully fund selected master's students from developing countries.

GOOD TO KNOW

VLIR-UOS (Flemish) and **ARES** (French community) offer full scholarships to students from developing countries — apply early.

6

STEP 06 OF 10

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

For the visa you must prove funds — recently about **€803/month** for the academic year — via a **bank statement, scholarship, or an "Annex 32" sponsorship** from a solvent guarantor in Belgium or the EU. You also need medical insurance.

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds	Annex 32	+ insurance
~€803/month	sponsor option	medical, required

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds** at the current amount — your own savings, a scholarship, or an **Annex 32 sponsorship** — plus medical insurance and proof of paid/arranged tuition.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **Annex 32** lets a solvent guarantor in Belgium/EU sponsor you — a useful route if you can't show the funds yourself.

7 STEP 07 OF 10

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Most **bachelor's programs are taught in Dutch or French** (requiring **B2** in the relevant language), while many **master's programs are in English** (typically **IELTS 6.0–7.0 or TOEFL 79–100**). Learning the local language helps daily life.

BY THE NUMBERS

Bachelor's	Master's	English
Dutch or French (B2)	often English	IELTS 6.0–7.0

HOW TO HELP

Take the **right test for your program's language** (Dutch/French B2 for most bachelor's, English for many master's), and learn the local language for daily life.

GOOD TO KNOW

Undergrad in Belgium is usually **in Dutch or French** — English options are concentrated at master's level.

8 STEP 08 OF 10

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, **register with your commune, arrange medical insurance, and set up a bank account**. Have documents **translated (into Dutch/French/German/English) and legalized/apostilled**. Housing is competitive in Brussels, Leuven, and Ghent — start early.

BY THE NUMBERS

Commune registration	Insurance + bank	Translate/legalize
first task	set up	documents

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **commune registration, insurance, bank** — and prepare **translated, legalized documents** in advance; secure housing early in the popular student cities.

GOOD TO KNOW

Documents must be in a **Belgian national language or English**, and often legalized — prepare them well ahead.

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STEP 09 OF 10

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Students may work **up to 20 hours per week during term** (with a student work permit "C" and a written student employment contract), and **full-time during holidays**. The work permit is generally included with your student residence permit.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work	Permit C	Full-time
20 hrs/week in term	for students	in holidays

HOW TO HELP

You may work **up to 20 hours/week** during term with a student employment contract (permit C), and full-time in holidays — useful, but budget primarily from other sources.

GOOD TO KNOW

A **written student employment contract** is required, and hours can't clash with classes — keep within the 20-hour limit.

10 STEP 10 OF 10

Thrive & Work After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

After completing a master's or PhD, non-EU graduates can apply for a **12-month job-seeker permit (search year / orientation year)** to find qualified work in Belgium, then move to a work permit and longer-term residence.

BY THE NUMBERS

Search year	After master's/PhD	Then
12-month permit	to find work	work permit & residence

HOW TO HELP

Plan for the **12-month search-year permit** after graduating, build networks (especially in Brussels' international scene), and target your field if you want to stay.

GOOD TO KNOW

Belgium's **12-month search-year permit** lets you stay to find work after a master's or PhD — a clear post-study pathway.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in Belgium: The Essentials

A snapshot — rules vary by community, so confirm everything with the Belgian representation, your community/university, and the immigration authorities.

The three communities

Education is run by the Flemish (Dutch: KU Leuven, Ghent, VUB), French (UCLouvain, ULB, Liège), and German communities, each with its own policies, tuition, and recognition.

Visa & permit

Non-EU/EEA students need a long-stay Type D student visa, then must register with their local commune within 8 days of arrival for a residence permit.

Money

Tuition is affordable but community-specific (non-EU higher, often €1,000–6,000+); prove ~€803/month funds (bank statement, scholarship, or Annex 32 sponsorship); VLIR-UOS and ARES scholarships.

Language

Most bachelor's programs are in Dutch or French (B2); many master's are in English (IELTS 6.0–7.0); local language helps daily life.

Work & after

Work up to 20 hrs/week in term (permit C, student contract), full-time in holidays; a 12-month search-year permit follows a master's/PhD.

YOUR BELGIAN JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Find Your Community.

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