Visa Requirements

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# Howest

Howest is a **public** higher education institution.

# Do you need a Belgian visa

A number of distinctions are made with respect to nationality. The most important one is that between **nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA)** and **non-EEA nationals**.

## EEA citizens

Students from EEA member states (European Union + Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) **do** **NOT** need a visa, they may reside in all the other EEA member states.

## Non-EEA citizens

### Students from non EEA member states

Students from non EEA member states **NEED** **a visa** or an authorisation to enter and stay in Belgium.

### Non EEA students enrolled at a home instition in another EEA country than Belgium and who already have a residence permit for that EEA country

Non-EEA students enrolled at a home instition in another EEA country than Belgium and who already have a residence permit for that EEA country, don’t need to apply for a Belgian visa for an exchange at Howest. Nevertheless Howest will submit a Belgian stay request to the Belgian Foreign Affairs Department for these students.  
  
In order to submit this request, Howest will need the following documents from the students, **all in one single pdf**, e-mailed to [**international.office@howest.be**](mailto:international.office@howest.be):

* Copy of your passport
* Copy of a valid residence permit for the entire duration of the mobility, issued by the first EU member state where you are enrolled as a student
* Proof of solvency (proof of grant/funding/livelihood) for the entire duration of the mobility
* Proof of a health insurance that covers the risks in Belgium for the entire duration of the mobility

If your request has been approved by the Belgian Foreign Affairs Department (usually about 1 month after the submission by Howest), you will receive a notice by e-mail.

Upon arrival in Belgium, then you will need to register at the city hall and submit the following documents in order to legally reside in Belgium for the duration of the mobility:

* The Foreign Affairs notice
* The Howest enrollment certificate that you will receive upon your arrival at Howest
* All the above-mentioned documents needed for the stay request (passport, valid residence permit 1st EU country, solvency and health insurance).

Please note that Howest cannot be held responsible for the completeness/quality of your data/documents when submitting your stay request.

## Chinese citizens

Chinese students who want to study in Flanders at universities or universities of applied sciences need an APS certificate issued by DAAD Beijing, with whom Flanders has a cooperation agreement, unless if there is a cooperation agreement between the Flemish institution and the Chinese home institution. In that case the student is exempted from the APS Procedure.

## Exceptions – special arrangements

Special arrangements apply for Switzerland. Monaco follows the French regulations.

# How to apply for a visa

As a rule, non-EEA students must apply for a visa at the Belgian Consulate or Embassy in their country or in the country where they legally reside. In each case, you must apply for a visa **before** coming to Belgium.  
If there is no Belgian consulate or embassy in your country, you may submit your application to the Belgian consulate or embassy in a neighbouring country.

The contact details of all Belgian embassies and consulates worldwide can be found [**here**](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/embassies_and_consulates).

In some countries, a visa application centre handles the visa procedures for Belgium, for example [VFS Global](https://www.vfsglobal.com/en/individuals/index.html) or [TLS Contact](https://be.tlscontact.com/) (i.a. for UK/South Africa residents).

# WHAT TYPE OF VISA can you apply for

## **Visa type C** (short-stay)

* Stay < 90 days
* Also known as a Tourist Visa Schengen.
* This visa type allows you to travel freely in the Schengen Area for maximum 90 days, not outside the Schengen Area.   
  For **EU countries that are not part of the Schengen area**, a stay in their territories is governed by individual visa requirements for the given foreign national’s country of origin.
* Never enter Belgium on a tourist visa if you intend to stay longer than 90 days or three months. This means this visa type C is not valid if you come for a Howest semester programme!

## Visa type D (long-stay) = Student Visa

* Stay > 90 days
* Also known as “Authorisation for Provisional Stay”.
* In case of a visa type D single entry:
* This visa type allows you to travel freely in the Schengen Area during the first 3 months of your stay.
* A residence permit is needed to travel outside the Schengen Area and in the Schengen Area after the first 3 months of your stay.  
  For **EU countries that are not part of the Schengen area**, a stay in their territories is governed by individual visa requirements for the given foreign national’s country of origin.
* In case of a visa type D multiple entries:
* This visa type allows you to travel several times between your home country and Belgium as long as your visa is valid.
* It also allows you to travel freely in the Schengen Area during the first 3 months of your stay.
* A residence permit is needed to travel outside the Schengen Area (unless if you travel to your home country) and in the Schengen Area after the first 3 months of your stay.  
  For **EU countries that are not part of the Schengen area**, a stay in their territories is governed by individual visa requirements for the given foreign national’s country of origin.
* A Visa type D is never a residence permit! You also have to register at the city hall for a residence permit (= A card) within the first 8 days after arrival!  
  -> see chapter 8 ‘How to apply for a residence permit?’

# WHAT ARE THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR A BELGIAN STUDENT VISA (=Visa type D)

As a general rule, authorisation to stay in Belgium for more than 3 months is granted to a foreign student wishing to pursue higher education here, or spend a preparatory year ahead of of higher education, as a regular student, in an educational establishment organised, recognised or subsidised by the public authorities, if that student:

* proves that he/she is a **regular student** in a higher education establishment organised, recognised or subsidised by the public authorities (please note that Howest is a public higher education institution),
* proves that he/she is **not carrying any of the diseases** which might endanger public health, and
* if aged over 21, produces a document stating that he/she has **no convictions** for crimes or offences under common law,
* proves via a ‘proof of solvency’ that he/she has **sufficient** [**means of subsistence**](https://dofi.ibz.be/fr/themes/ressortissants-dun-pays-tiers/etudes/favoris/moyens-de-subsistance-suffisants)(website under construction, info not available in English) to cover healthcare, living costs, study and repatriation costs.

🡪 You can prove your means of subsistence by means of:

* a **sponsor or guarantor who signs the form ‘Commitment that charge will be taken’** (also called “annex 32”). The annex 32 must be completed and signed by either a Belgian, an EU-citizen living in the EU, a non-EU citizen with permanent residence in an EU member state, or your direct relatives up to the third degree and who must avail of sufficient income. Your guarantor must be able to prove that he/she earns at least **2758** **EUR net per month,** being 1969 EUR for themselves plus 789 EUR for the student.
* a **scholarship attestation** from your home or host university
* proof of your own financial means by transferring a fixed amount to a **blocked bank account** administered by Howest, that will then issue a **financial certificate**.

The minimum amount the student must have at his/her disposal is 789 EUR per month of stay in Belgium. That comes down to **3945 EUR for a semester** or **7890 EUR for 2 semesters.**

If your visa is denied for any reason, your payment will be refunded by Howest minus a 100 EUR administrative fee. These funds will be reserved for your living expenses during the academic year 2023-2024.

The financial certificate will be issued upon receiving by Howest the transfer into its bank account. This amount will be paid back in monthly installments once you are in Belgium, and you have opened a Belgian bank account.

Upon arrival, you will need to register at city hall which will enable you to open a Belgian bank account. A Community Manager will explain this procedure in detail during our Kick-Off Week. Once your account has been set up, you will start receiving payments in installments of 1.100 EUR per month. Payments can only be made to a Belgian account.

**Important note**: it can take several months to be able to register at the city hall and open a Belgian bank account. Therefore, it is important to **be prepared to bridge a gap of several months with other financial means than the blocked account money.**

During that period, Howest cannot help you out via cash advance or money transfer.

To request the financial certificate needed for your visa application, please mail to [**blockedaccount@howest.be**](mailto:blockedaccount@howest.be) and add [**international.office@howest.be**](mailto:international.office@howest.be) in cc. **Please note that issuing a financial certificate can take several weeks.**

# WHat DOCUMENTS are required

When visiting the embassy or consulate you will need the following documents for a visa type D:

* A completed and signed visa application form (in duplicate)
* A travel document in which a visa can be affixed and which is valid for more than 12 months (e.g. a passport)
* Permission to enroll at a public higher education institution (Acceptance Letter)
* Proof that you satisfy the conditions for access to higher education (such as diploma, academic records)
* Proof you can support yourself (proof of solvency = [sufficient means of subsistence](https://dofi.ibz.be/sites/dvzoe/EN/Application-guides/Pages/Sufficient_means_of_subsistence_Students.aspx))
* Certificate of good conduct
* Medical certificate
* Valid proof of payment of the [administrative fee](https://dofi.ibz.be/sites/dvzoe/EN/Application-guides/Pages/Administrative%20fee.aspx)
* Declaration signed by yourself, certifying that you will leave Flanders (Belgium) upon the completion of your studies
* Recent passport pictures, signed on the back

More information can be found [here](https://dofi.ibz.be/fr/themes/ressortissants-dun-pays-tiers/etudes/1ere-autorisation-de-sejour-demande-de-visa-d) (website under construction, info not available in English yet).

**Considering that the requirements can vary or change with time, always consult the Belgian Embassy, where you are planning to apply for a visa, for the latest information.**

# HOW MUCH DOES A student VISA APPLICATION COST

For a visa type D (long-term):

* there is a handling fee of 228 EUR per application (students who get a Flemish or Howest grant are exempted)
* an extra contribution for administration costs may be charged.

Detailed information can be found on the website of the [Belgian Immigration Office.](https://dofi.ibz.be/en/themes/faq/fee)

# HOW LONG DOES THE VISA PROCESS TAKES

**Request your visa as soon as possible as it can easily take 2 months in getting your visa!**

# HOW can you APPLY FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT

Within the first 8 days of your stay, you are supposed to register at the City Hall in the city you are staying. This, however, is not possible and you will instead be informed by your campus community manager/campus international coordinator about City Hall Registration requirements. They will also let you know which specific documents are required for registration closer to your arrival and the current costs for registering.

The local authorities will issue an identity document for a foreign student temporarily living in Belgium (residence permit= A card), which will be available 5 to 6 weeks after registration at the city hall. EEA students will get a paper residence permit for free, non-EEA students will get an electronic residence permit that costs up to 24 euro.

This document will allow multiple exits/entries in Belgium and it will also show the exact duration of stay. Insurance companies may require it in case of accidents/damage!

Moreover, without this document, a Visa Type D (single entry) will allow you to travel around in the Schengen Area (for a list of the Schengen Countries, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen_Area>) during the first 3 months since your first day of arrival but if you still want to travel after this period or outside the Schengen Area, you definitely need to have your residence permit first in order to re-enter Belgium.

The same goes for a D visa with multiple entries (instead of a single entry), but in addition you can travel several times between your home country and Belgium as long as your visa is valid.

* When registering at the city hall as a NON-EU student (exchange and degree students), you will generally need to present the following documents, though this can vary based on your particular status:
* Your passport (with D-visa) (= stamped when you enter Belgium)
* 2 passport photo’s (size 45 mm to 35 mm)
* The certificate of enrolment from your school in Kortrijk/Bruges (after final registration, download from Howest [https://ibamaflex.howest.be](https://ibamaflex.howest.be/) or visit/contact: [kortrijk.studentensecretariaat@howest.be](mailto:kortrijk.studentensecretariaat@howest.be) or [brugge.studentensecretariaat@howest.be](mailto:brugge.studentensecretariaat@howest.be)
* The complete questionnaire ‘registration in the alien register/Inschrijving In Het Vreemdelingenregister’ (you can find this at the reception desk of your campus, at the student admin office and it will be sent to you via your Howest Community Manager/Campus International Coordinator as well)
* Proof of a health insurance (Expat & Co policy info and proof for degree students and same or other instructed proof for exchange students)
* The proof of your grant, scholarship or blocked account with the school

(for blocked account proof, contact: [blockedaccount@howest.be](mailto:blockedaccount@howest.be))

* Your address in Kortrijk/Bruges (kot) (copy of your rental contract)

For more information, you can consult the city hall of Kortrijk, Department Foreign Affairs (only available in Dutch): <https://www.kortrijk.be/producten/buitenlandse-studenten>

The website of the city hall of Bruges is only available in Dutch: <https://www.brugge.be/vreemdelingen-2>.

Here you can find a summary [How to Register at Kortrijk City Hall](https://www.howest.be/fs/documents/Kortrijk%20City%20Hall%20Schema%20how%20to%20register%20-%202023%20-%20updated%205%20May%202023%20-%20with%20Howest%20Info%20included.docx)

Here you can find a document that non-EEA students have to fill in: [Registration in the alien register – Inschrijving in Het Vreemdelingsregister](https://www.howest.be/fs/documents/Registration%20in%20the%20alien%20register%20-%20Inschrijving%20In%20Het%20Vreemdelingenregister.doc)

# Other resources about visa requirements

Study in Flanders web page <http://www.studyinflanders.be/en/preparing-your-stay/checklist/>

<https://dofi.ibz.be/en> (many parts of the English website still under construction - full info on the pages in French <https://dofi.ibz.be/fr/themes/third-country-nationals/etudes> or Dutch <https://dofi.ibz.be/nl/themes/third-country-nationals/studies> )