

# Visa Requirements

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## 2 HOWEST

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

## 3 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**.

### 3.1 EEA CITIZENS

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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.

### 3.2 NON-EEA CITIZENS

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#### 3.2.1 STUDENTS FROM NON EEA MEMBER STATES

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

#### 3.2.2 NON EEA STUDENTS ENROLLED AT A HOME INSTITUTION IN ANOTHER EEA COUNTRY THAN BELGIUM AND WHO ALREADY HAVE A RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR THAT EEA COUNTRY

Non-EEA students enrolled at a home institution 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.

### 3.3 CHINESE CITIZENS

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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.

### 3.4 EXCEPTIONS – SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

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

## 4 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](#).

In some countries, a visa application centre handles the visa procedures for Belgium, for example [VFS Global](#) or [TLS Contact](#) (i.a. for UK/South Africa residents).

## 5 WHAT TYPE OF VISA CAN YOU APPLY FOR

### 5.1 VISA TYPE C (SHORT-STAY)

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- 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!

### 5.2 VISA TYPE D (LONG-STAY) = STUDENT VISA

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- 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?'

## 6 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 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** 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 **3.235,88 EUR net per month**, being 2173,88 EUR for themselves plus 1.062 EUR for the student.  
In order to be accepted, Annex 32 must be legalised by the Belgian Embassy competent for the sponsor's place of residence and must bear the official stamp and the statement "sufficient solvency".
- a **scholarship or loan attestation** from your home or host university
- proof of sufficient means of subsistence may be provided by means of a **bank statement only if** the bank account:
  - is held in an EU Member State, specifically either the EU Member State through which the student initially entered as a student or Belgium,
  - is **in the name of the student**, and
  - demonstrates adequate funds to cover the entire duration of the mobility period in Belgium;

in this context, a bank statement from the student's own account may be accepted provided it shows a **minimum balance of 5.310 EUR for a semester or 10.620 EUR for 2 semesters.**

- 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 1062 EUR per month of stay in Belgium. That comes down to **5.310 EUR for a semester** or **10.620 EUR for 2 semesters**.

The financial certificate will be issued by Howest after you have deposited the correct amount of money into the bank account of Howest and it has actually been received into the Howest account.

This amount will be paid back in monthly instalments once you are in Belgium and you have opened a Belgian or Wise bank account.

Please note that opening a Belgian bank account after arrival is only possible once you have obtained your Belgian residence permit and after the necessary administrative processing.

Students who do not yet have a Wise account should be aware of an alternative option that allows them to obtain a Belgian bank account quicker.

**KBC is a bank institution that currently offers the only possibility for non-EU students to open a Belgian bank account before arrival in Belgium**, even without a Belgian national registration number. This allows students who do not have a Wise account to already have a Belgian bank account number upon arrival.

Students must, however, present the required documents **in person at a local KBC branch within 30 days after arrival**; failing to do so will result in the account being blocked.

For students using the standard procedure (neither Wise nor KBC pre-arrival), opening a Belgian bank account after arrival may take several months. You first need to receive your residence permit, and Howest requires time to process your request after you provide your bank account number.

Students should therefore be prepared to cover their living expenses during this period using **financial means other than the blocked account funds**, as Howest cannot provide cash advances or money transfers.

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

## 7 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)
- Certificate of good conduct
- Medical certificate
- Valid proof of payment of the administrative fee
- 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](#).

## 8 HOW MUCH DOES A STUDENT VISA APPLICATION COST

For a visa type D (long-term):

- there is a [handling/visa](#) fee of 180 EUR per application
- an extra [contribution](#) fee of 251 EUR for administration costs may be charged (students who get a Flemish or Howest grant are exempted)

Detailed information can be found on the website of the [Belgian Immigration Office](#).

## 9 HOW LONG DOES THE VISA PROCESS TAKES

**Request your visa as soon as possible as it usually takes 90 days in getting your visa!**

## 10 HOW CAN YOU APPLY FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT

**All international students, both EEA and non-EEA, have to register at the city hall within eight days after arrival in Belgium.** 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 28,50 euros in Kortrijk/26,20 euros in Bruges (amount might slightly raise). 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](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.

**The International Coordinator of your campus will make you an appointment for registration at the city hall in the first week after your arrival,** normally during the Orientation Week. You will receive the appointment info by e-mail.

➔ When registering at the city hall, you will need to present the following documents:

- Valid international passport
- Your long-stay visa for Belgium
- Passport photo (max 6 months old)
- Proof of enrolment at Howest
- A copy of your student accommodation rental contract
- Proof of health insurance coverage
- Proof of solvency
- 4 recent passport photos

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/burgerzaken/niet-belgen>.

## 11 OTHER RESOURCES ABOUT VISA REQUIREMENTS

Study in Flanders web page <http://www.studyinlanders.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> )

