

# International Welcome Guide



Welcome to the University of Louvain!

Dear student,  
Dear researcher,  
Dear lecturer,

We wish you a pleasant stay in Belgium and a successful and rewarding educational experience.

This guide will help you attend to most of the formalities and procedures that are required before and after your arrival in Belgium and, as you approach the end of your stay, leading up to your departure. You will find information on immigration regulations, accommodation, university enrolment and registration, and much more. Perhaps most important, you will find a wealth of information regarding the many support services at your disposal to help you thrive throughout your stay at UCLouvain.

After reading this guide, if you have any unanswered questions, please visit our website.

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# Administrative information

# Immigration et visa



## For students, researchers and lecturers who are staying for more than three months :

- Citizens of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway or Switzerland do not need a visa.
- Citizens of any other country have to apply for a visa at the home country's Belgian embassy or consulate as soon as possible.

Regardless of nationality, individuals who are staying for more than three months are required to register with the municipality ('Administration communale', often spoken of simply as the 'commune') of residence within eight days of arrival in Belgium. This registration is valid for one year (five years for EU nationals) and must be resubmitted for renewal one month prior to its expiration (details below under 'When you arrive').

Researchers and lecturers employed by UCLouvain may also require a Belgian work permit (see 'Work permit' below).

More information is available at the home country's Belgian embassy or consulate, the Belgian Immigration Office and the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

# Work permit



- **For students :**

As a general rule, students are exempt from having to obtain a work permit. Those who wish to work (as student part-timers) can do so provided they have a valid residence permit in Belgium.

More information is available at the 'Foreign students' page of the Belgian Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (French), the federal website 'Student at Work' and the UCLouvain Jobs Service.

- **For researchers and lecturers :**

Citizens of a European Economic Area (EEA) member state\*, or researchers or lecturers who come to Belgium under the terms of a hosting agreement (and thereby possess a scientific visa), do not require the single permit\*\*.

Citizens of any other country are required to obtain the single permit permit before arriving in Belgium. The UCLouvain human resources department (contact: Edith Serville) is responsible for submitting applications to the relevant Belgian ministry. The procedure for obtaining a permit and the timescale may vary according to individual status and whether the individual is a Belgian resident. Residents abroad must apply for a visa at the Belgian embassy or consulate in the country of origin. The visa is granted based on – among other things – the nature of the stay and, in the case of a work stay, possessing the single permit\*\*.

*(\*) Thus: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Romania, United Kingdom, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland.*



# Work permit



*(\*\*) What is the 'single permit'?*

*It is the result of the implementation of a European Union directive that aims to grant nationals of non-member countries of the European Economic Area (EEA) a work and residence permit simultaneously via a single request. Such nationals who wish to work in Belgium for more than 90 days must submit to the competent region, through their employer, a single application for a single permit to work AND reside in Belgium.*

*In Belgium, the Aliens Office and the region deal with the applications jointly: the Aliens Office deals with the residence permit and the region deals with the work permit.*

*If the work permit and the residence permit are granted, the applicant will receive a single document stating that he or she is authorised to stay in Belgium for more than 90 days in order to work.*

*Exemptions from this 'single permit' are provided based mainly on length of stay and type of job that the person will perform.*

*Single permits are valid for maximum one year and must be renewed each subsequent year.*



# Bank accounts



If they **stay more than three months**, students, researchers and lecturers should open a bank account as soon as possible after arrival. In fact, before leaving their home country, they should ask their bank whether it has a local counterpart in Belgium, which is likely and might be advantageous. As opening an account can take several days (see 'Open a bank account' in the 'When you arrive' section), arriving with sufficient funds in cash is necessary.

# Social security



**Students other than grant-assisted PhD students do not pay Belgian social security contributions** but do need to take action regarding reimbursement of healthcare costs (see 'Healthcare' section).

**Grant-assisted PhD students, as well as researchers and lecturers, with an employment contract are subject to social security contributions**, which are deducted at the source and payable to the Belgian National Social Security Office (ONSS). These contributions will provide either full or partial (not including unemployment and pension) social security cover, depending on nationality.

The schemes covered by the social security system include:

- compulsory health and incapacity insurance, healthcare sector;
- compulsory health and incapacity insurance, benefits sector;
- family allowance;
- retirement and survivor pensions;
- unemployment insurance;
- annual holidays (for manual workers);
- occupational accident insurance;
- insurance for occupational diseases.

# Healthcare



- **Students, researchers and lecturers who are citizens of the European Union,** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland must apply for the European Health Insurance Card. This card is free and provides access to the same public healthcare (e.g. doctors, pharmacies, hospitals or treatment centres) enjoyed by Belgian residents. Charges for medical care are reimbursed by the home country immediately or after returning to the home country (depending of the home country). However, EU nationals may wish to join a Belgian health insurance scheme ("mutuelle") (see below) to make sure they benefit from all available services (for example, child supervision at home).
- **Students, researchers and lecturers who are citizens of any other country** must join a health insurance scheme (the so-called 'mutuelle' or 'mutualité'; French and Dutch only) as soon as possible after arrival. These schemes reimburse the cost of medical care (either in full or in part depending on the type of services provided) and some medications, and are run by a range of agencies – socialist, Christian, liberal and independent – any of which can be chosen. Non-compulsory 'complementary' health insurance, which covers some or all of the costs not reimbursed by compulsory health insurance, is also available.
- **International students and some visiting professors** (for example, those participating in Erasmus + teaching assignments) often have to prove that they are covered by international health insurance.

International visitors who stay in Belgium for less than three months cannot join a Belgian health insurance scheme.

[See also "Register with a health insurance agency" page 52](#)

# Family Allowances



Bachelor's, master's and non-grant-assisted PhD students who have enrolled in a degree programme and are under 25 years of age will receive from the UCLouvain Student Support Service a certificate addressed to their parents' Family Allowance Fund.

Grant-assisted PhD students, as well as researchers and lecturers, with an employment contract are entitled to a family allowance (French, Dutch, German language website).

**Five types of allowances** are offered by the benefits system:

- birth grant;
- adoption allowance;
- basic family allowance;
- orphan's allowance;
- supplementary family allowance

The application for a family allowance, either when a person is employed or following the birth of the first child, must be submitted through the employer using a standard form available from the Human Resources Department.

# Income Taxes and VAT



Students and grant holders (PhD students and postdoctoral researchers) are not liable to tax as individuals unless they earn above a certain amount: see [studentatwork.be](http://studentatwork.be). Only PhD students and postdoctoral researchers will receive a tax return form. Contact the Human Resources Department for more information about tax exemption conditions for grant holders.

Non-grant-assisted PhD students, as well as researchers and lecturers, with an employment contract must complete an [individual tax return](#) if, on 1 January of the tax year in question, they:

- are included in the National Register;
- have their domicile or centre of financial interest in Belgium;
- are not exempt from the requirement to submit a tax return

Individual tax returns must be submitted annually to the department specified on the tax return.

In Belgium, the normal rate of VAT is 21%. However, lower rates of 6% and 12% are applied to certain categories of goods and services. More information on [belgium.be](http://belgium.be).

# Unemployment benefits



After they complete their studies, all students should consult [the Belgian Social Security website](#) (French, English, Dutch, German) to find out whether they are entitled to unemployment benefits.

As a general rule, **grant-assisted PhD students and employed researchers and lecturers can only claim unemployment benefits if they are legally resident in Belgium upon completion of their employment contract.** Once their residence permit has been extended and they have obtained a C4 form from the Personnel Department, they can go to the NEO (National Employment Office) and apply for unemployment benefits. In addition to this legal residency requirement, they must also prove that they satisfy other conditions before they can claim benefits. These include having worked for a certain number of days during the reference period, the exact number varying according to age.

*(\*) Unemployment cover only applies to EU nationals and nationals of Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada and Quebec, Chile, Iceland, India, Israel, Japan, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldavia, Morocco, Norway, the Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo, San Marino, South Korea, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States, Uruguay and the independent states of the former Yugoslavia.*

# Pension rights



- **Grant-assisted PhD students and employed researchers and lecturers** accrue pension or retirement rights based on the social security contributions deducted directly from their grant or salary. What happens to their Belgian pension once their research in Belgium comes to an end depends on where they go afterward.
- **Individuals who move to a country within the European Economic Area** (the European Union and its member states) **and retire in that country will have their Belgian pension exported** in accordance with European Regulation 1408/71. Under this Regulation (which also applies to non-nationals of the EEA since European Regulation 859/2003 came into force), each member state where an individual has paid social security contributions for at least one year must pay a graduated pension (based on length of service) corresponding to the full contribution period in the country of retirement. A pension is received only upon reaching the country's official retirement age, which in the case of Belgium is 65 years of age.
- **Retirees in a country outside the European Economic Area can have their Belgian pension exported only if they are a national of the European Economic Area or a country with which Belgium has concluded a bilateral social security convention** (Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada and Quebec, Chile, Croatia, Iceland, India, Israel, Japan, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldavia, Morocco, Norway, the Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo, San Marino, South Korea, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States, Uruguay and the independent states of the former Yugoslavia). Those who are not a national of any of these countries will only be entitled to a Belgian pension if they remain in Europe.



# Practical information

# Accommodation



## For students:

- UCLouvain Accommodation Office offers 5,725 university units (rooms in shared flats, studios, flats, and family apartments) on the Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels Woluwe and Mons campuses, primarily for use by students.
- Private property agencies (French)
- Private landlords who rent out rooms or flats
- Rental listings at [www.student.be](http://www.student.be) and [www.kots.be](http://www.kots.be)
- The Findaroom application on Facebook, updated daily (enter 'Findaroom' in Facebook's search engine).

Those who arrive at Louvain-la-Neuve without having reserved accommodation are advised to check our webpage "Alternatives to UCLouvain accommodation". A recommended solution is the Kaleo Youth hostel in Louvain-la-Neuve.

For students, most accommodation managed by the university and private companies consist of shared flats: students have their own room but share a kitchen, living area and bathroom facilities (shower and toilets). Rooms are furnished (washbasin, bed, mattress, chair, desk, wardrobe and bookcase). Tenants must provide their own bed linen and crockery. Shared flats can accommodate six, eight or ten tenants. Average monthly rent for a room is €295. Studios and flats generally comprise one room with a kitchen area and shower. Apartments are available for students with families; they have between one and three bedrooms. Rents range from €295 to €990, depending on the type of accommodation and number of bedrooms.

# Accommodation



UCLouvain has also created the unique concept of theme-based shared flats (the so-called 'kots à projet'), which involves students living in shared accommodation and working together on a social, cultural or sport-related project.

Students with a disability can benefit from adapted accommodation mainly through two options: a shared flat or an individual flat. Additionally, some students without a disability are keen to offer their help by renting accommodation to a student with a disability.

UCLouvain accommodation is in high demand and it is recommended that students reserve it as far in advance as possible by contacting the Accommodation Office. Lists of private accommodation is also available on the various university campuses. Full range of information on student accommodation (Accommodation Office website)

- **For researchers and lecturers** (including research assistants, scientific collaborators, interns):

In Louvain-la-Neuve, the Accommodation Service proposes a list of private short- and long-term accommodation and property agencies.

Accommodation can also be searched at sites such as :

- [Immoweb](#)
- [Immovlan](#)
- [Logic-immo](#)
- [SabbaticalHomes](#)

See also "Find your accommodation" page 44

# Budget / Cost of Living



Naturally, planning a budget depends on specific situations. Generally speaking, a **single person should plan on an annual budget of approximately €13.200**. Families and shared households should assume an additional budget of at least €3,000 for each extra person.

Accommodation costs are the greatest expense. Average monthly rent for UCLouvain accommodation (a room) is €295. Average rent for privately owned accommodation is between €600 and €800 for a one-bedroom flat, and between €750 and €900 for a two-bedroom flat.

Other costs depend on lifestyle and use of university services (University Restaurants, certain university library services, sports facilities).

For students, a significant portion of these costs is due in September: enrolment fees, health insurance premiums, fees for most courses and syllabuses, first month's rent, security deposit and initial accommodation costs. As a result, a minimum of €2,500 (excluding tuition fees) will be required in September. Thereafter, students must anticipate monthly rental payments and living expenses.

Sample prices of everyday items:

- Train ticket from Brussels to Louvain-la-Neuve: **€5.50**
- Daily newspaper: **€2**
- Cinema ticket: **€8**
- Private restaurant daily special: **€10-13**
- Sandwich: **€3.50**
- Loaf of bread (800 g): **€2.10**
- 250 g of chocolates: **€6**
- 1 kg of apples: **€1.50-2.50**
- Litre of milk: **€0.60-1**
- Package of ground coffee (250 g): **€4-5**
- University Restaurant daily special: **€3.35 (student) - €5.25 (staff)**

# Budget / Cost of Living



## Paid employment and student status

Undertaking paid employment or a student job is subject to very strict regulations (a work permit is compulsory for students who are not from the European Union). By the same token, current legislation does not allow students to finance their studies by student jobs alone. More information is available at the federal website ['Studentatwork'](#).

# Getting around Belgium



## Public transport

- **The Belgian National Railways (SNCB)** offers discounts for adults under 26. Children under six ride free (up to four per adult), those aged six to eleven ride at half-price. Other discounts and passes are available, such as the Railpass, which is good for ten trips within Belgium over one year, and the Benelux pass, which allows unlimited travel on any five days within one month of purchase in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Attention: the Eurail Benelux Pass is valid only for non-European residents; the Interrail Benelux Pass is valid only for European residents.
- **TEC is the regional bus service for Wallonia** and **De Lijn is the regional bus service for Flanders**; both offer service to, from and in Brussels. De Lijn also operates trams, including the Kusttram which operates along the Belgian coast. For public transport in Brussels (metro, bus and tram), consult STIB-MIVB as well as information on the Brussels public transport system's MOBIB electronic card, which can also be loaded with ticketing for Belgian rail, TEC or De Lijn. Passengers must indicate they intend to board approaching buses and trams by signalling the driver with a simple raise of the hand, otherwise they might not stop.

## By taxi

All major towns have taxi services, but they are quite expensive. They can rarely be hailed from the roadside; taxi stands are located at strategic locations, such as central squares and train stations. They can also be booked by phone and online. Drivers often do not have detailed knowledge, so passengers should be prepared to explain. As fares include service, tipping is not necessary, though rounding up is a frequent practice.

# Getting around Belgium



## Taxi companies

### - Brussels

- [Taxis Bleus](#)
- [Taxis Verts](#)
- [Autolux](#)

### - Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve

- [Taxis Blancs](#)  
[Uber](#) is also available in Belgium.

## By bicycle

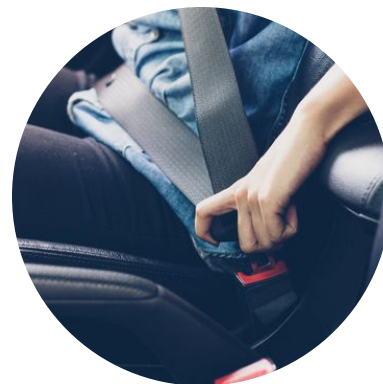
Overall, Belgium takes cycling seriously and is continually adding lanes and paths.

Cyclists must know the rules of the road (see our sister university KULeuven's helpful guide) and be particularly aware that traffic approaching from the right has right of way.

Equipment can be rented in most towns and/or train stations for a reasonable price. Automated bike sharing networks include the Blue Bike nationwide network, Villo! in Brussels, La Bia Velo in Namur and Velo Antwerpen in Antwerp. Cyclists can even bring their bikes on trains or rent bikes as part of the train ticket price.



# Driving in Belgium



Belgium has a dense network of motorways, none of which are tolled. Road conditions are excellent, service stations are plentiful. Traffic congestion in Brussels can be heavy. Signs can sometimes be unclear and on secondary roads even absent. Road signs are in Dutch in Flanders and in French in Wallonia.

The minimum age for renting a car is 21; one year's driving experience and a credit card are required. All major car rental agencies are available at airports and major train stations, across cities and in towns, Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz, etc.

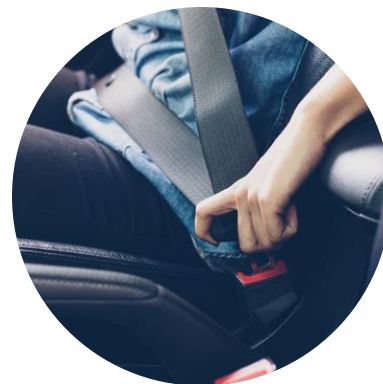
## Driver's licence

Drivers must have a valid license and carry it while driving. The **minimum driving age is 18**.

Licences issued by an EU or EEA country are recognised throughout the EU. Some licences issued by non-EU/EEA countries may be valid for short-term stays up to three months; others may be valid for short-term stays up to six months but only in conjunction with an International Driver's Permit issued by national automobile associations (for country-specific requirements, check with the embassy or consulate in Belgium). For longer stays, licences issued by non-EU/EEA countries that have a licence exchange agreement with Belgium can be exchanged for a Belgian licence upon registering with the commune of residence.

Otherwise, a Belgian licence must be acquired by taking both written and practical driving tests; it is possible to benefit from an interpreter when taking the written exam.

# Driving in Belgium



## Rules of the road

Traffic drives on the right. Speed limits in urban areas are 50 kph (30 mph), on motorways 120 kph (75 mph) and 90 kph (55 mph) on other national roads. Unless intersections are otherwise marked, drivers coming from the right (and turning to the right) have priority and may proceed without stopping. Buses and trams always have priority.

Third-party insurance is essential and comprehensive insurance is highly recommended. Wearing safety belts is mandatory and no child under 12 can sit in the front passenger seat if back seats are available. Drink-driving is illegal and severely punished. Mobile phone use while driving must be hands-free.

Motorcycle drivers and passengers must wear gloves, a jacket with long sleeves, long trousers, and boots that protect the ankles. Children under three are not allowed on motorcycles. Children between three and eight can be passengers only on motorcycles up to 125cc and must be carried in a special child's seat. More complete information is available in the Belgian Highway Code (French and Dutch) and various English guides online.

# Postal Services



The Belgian postal service, **bpost**, operates post offices Monday to Friday from 8:30 or 9:00 am to 4:00 or 5:00 pm. Some are open late Fridays and Saturday mornings.

Increasingly, however, supermarkets and press shops also offer postal services.

Public **mail boxes are red**.

# Telephone / Internet



There are **three main mobile phone service providers** :

- [Proximus](#)
- [Orange](#)
- [Telenet-Base](#)

Each company offers a range of services and packages. Tariffs and conditions should be compared prior to entering into a contract, which can be obtained by visiting the nearest shop with:

- ID (passport or identity card);
- proof of address (a utility bill, property rental contract or bank statement);
- bank account IBAN number.

Mobile deals can be fixed contract, rechargeable or pay as you go.

Several companies offer landlines either individually or as part of package deals that combine landline, internet, television and/or mobile service :

- [Proximus](#)
- [Telenet](#)
- [VOO](#)
- [Scarlet](#)
- [Dommel](#)
- [Billi](#)
- [Cybernet](#)
- [EDP Net](#)
- [SFR Belgique](#)
- [TV From Home](#)

# Banks / Payments



Several banks have campus branches, which are generally open from 9 am to 3 pm on weekdays and have 24-hour ATM service :

- [BNP Paribas Fortis](#)
- [ING](#)
- [CBC](#)
- [KBC](#)
- [Belfius](#)
- [Beobank](#)
- [Argenta](#)
- [Deutsche Bank](#)

Payment by cards is highly developed in Belgium – they can almost always be used, with rare exceptions, even for tiny sums – so acquiring a payment card is necessary.

Payment by check is no longer possible.

Western Union agencies are located throughout Belgium including in Louvain-la-Neuve.

# Childcare / schools



## Childcare

In the French Community of Belgium, the Office of Birth and Childhood (ONE) is responsible for organising care for children aged three and under. There are various types of childcare facilities, but their number is limited. Therefore, one should take the time to search for the right facility. In practice, registering a future child can be done beginning with the fourth month of pregnancy.

The cost of childcare varies based on the type of facility but all costs are tax deductible. Thus a childcare facility subsidised by ONE offers prices proportional to the parents' income, whereas other facilities set their own prices. More information on childcare facilities in the French Community of Belgium can be found at the ONE website.

### **The University of Louvain has two nurseries.**

Both are located in Louvain-la-Neuve :

- Pomme d'happy welcomes around 24 infants.
- Le P'tit Matelot (tel: 00 32 (0) 10 47 88 67) receives children if something unexpected comes up, if someone is needed to watch over a child for a few hours, or if childcare is required on a regular basis or for extended periods of time.

## Schools

Compulsory education, which applies from the age of six to 18, is free in Belgium. The choice of institution is left to the parents. There is a wide range of secondary schools: collèges, instituts, lycées, athénées, etc.

Education is organised based on the following schema:

- Fundamental education: preschool begins at age 2½ and continues for three years; elementary school begins at age six and continues for six years.
- Secondary education: six years split into three two-year cycles.

# Childcare / schools



There are **two networks of subsidised education**: the official network (state schools) and the open network (religiously or non-religiously affiliated schools). The cost of attendance is limited to school expenses such as books, photocopies and regular outings. For details (and a list of the region's schools), go to [www.enseignement.be](http://www.enseignement.be).

**A third network is private** – not subsidised by the government – and therefore requires the payment of school fees. For European schools, visit the Schola Europaea website. A list of international schools in Belgium can be found at the website of the Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS).

Louvain-la-Neuve hosts numerous primary and secondary schools in the two subsidised networks. These schools and their contact information are available at the official website of Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve, and in the 'Guide des commerces et services de Louvain-la-Neuve' available both at the Student Support Service ('Point de repère') and at the Inforville counter near the train station ticket windows. For other communes, consult their websites for school lists.



# Smoking



**Smoking is prohibited in any public building in Belgium**, including all university buildings, student accommodation, pubs and restaurants (though separate smoking rooms are permitted under strict conditions), as well as shopping malls, public transport and taxis.

Basically, **one can only smoke outside**. Smoking in any public enclosed space is a criminal offence subject to a fine.

# Electricity/Television



## Electricity

The electrical current is 220 volts AC and standard European plugs have two round pins.

As the market has liberalised in recent years, the number of electricity and gas providers has multiplied and comparison shopping is essential.

## Television

Over 95% of Belgian households have cable television. The main cable network operators in the Brussels Region and Wallonia are Proximus, VOO, Telenet and Scarlet. They offer package deals that can include television, internet, landline and/or mobile services. There are no national television channels in Belgium. The two main public networks are RTBF in the French Community (Wallonia and Brussels) and VRT in the Flemish Community (Flanders and Brussels)

Most cable, satellite and IPTV platforms in Belgium distribute stations from other European countries including the Netherlands, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy (NPO 1, NPO 2, NPO 3, ARD, ZDF, BBC One, BBC Two, BBC World News, BBC Entertainment, TF1, France 2, France 3, Rai 1). RTBF channels include La Une, La Deux and La Trois. The private RTL Group runs the French-language channels RTL-TVI, Club RTL and Plug RTL. La Une and RTL-TVI are the main channels with local newscasts and the most local programming.

# Waste management



Recycling is important in Belgium. Rubbish is sorted at the source – in other words, in the household – into specific coloured sacks that must be purchased at local supermarkets, or into similarly coloured bins (depending on accommodation). Rubbish crews collect the sacks from the curb or trash bin outside residences on specific days – leaving rubbish out on the wrong day is subject to a fine.

The three basic categories of waste are :

- Paper and cardboard
- Plastic, metal, aluminium-lined cartons (e.g. milk) (often in blue sacks)
- Non-recyclable waste (often in white sacks)

Recyclable glass is taken by residents to one of the many public bins for clear and coloured glass found throughout every commune. Throwing out recyclable glass in the white or any other sack can be subject to a fine.

Depending on the commune, additional sorting collection may be available :

- Food waste/compost
- Garden waste

Bebat offers collection points to recycle batteries.

For specifics about what exactly can and cannot be recycled, visit Fostplus, which also includes an interactive collection calendar. Alternatively for collection days, check with the commune, whose website will also offer more information on recycling electronics and batteries, collecting bulky items, and much else.

# Doctors, hospitals and pharmacies



Belgium's health service functions well. Financed by the state and national and private insurance, its many hospitals are modern, well managed and offer high-quality care and treatment. Bills are paid immediately (for insurance, see 'Healthcare' in 'Administrative information' section). Healthcare related to hospital admissions are billed directly to the health insurance funds and the patient is only billed for the patient's contribution.

Pharmacists are highly professional and an excellent resource for advice and remedies for minor aches and pains. Pharmacies are generally open 9am to 6pm Monday through Friday, and increasingly Saturday mornings, and particular pharmacies (pharmacies de garde) are open nights and weekends.

Your GP is the first person to contact if you are ill. He or she is interested in the health of the whole person, and will provide treatment, offer personalised advice and may refer you to a specialist if needed. You can contact a GP at any time, even at night and at the weekend, using the organised on-call system.

On-call medical doctors (médecins de garde) are available for non-emergencies; contact information is available on commune websites, e.g. Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve (02 38 50 500). Options in Brussels include La Garde Bruxelloise and SOS Médecins.

At some point in the future, dialling 1733 anywhere in Belgium will connect callers to the nearest on-call doctor.

# Emergency numbers



## For emergencies, from any phone in Belgium:

- Ambulance, medical and fire : **100**
- Federal police : **101**
- From any phone in the EU : **112**

## Other emergency contacts:

- Belgian Poison Centre : **070 245 245**
- Community Help Service Helpline (24-hour crisis support/advice in English) : **02 648 40 14**
- Child Focus (missing/abused children) : **116 000**
- Find a hospital

See also "[UCLouvain emergency and security numbers](#)" page 43

# Religions



Freedom of religion and separation of church and state are guaranteed by the Belgian Constitution.

Belgium's religious tradition is Catholic, although Protestant churches, mosques, synagogues and temples are found in most cities.

About 65% of the population is Christian, of which 58% are Catholic. Members of Protestant, Eastern Orthodox churches and other Christian denominations make up 7%. Muslims account for about 5%. About 27% are agnostic or atheist. Practitioners of Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism have a small presence.

# University life



# Academic calendar



For all students except PhD students, who can begin their programmes at any point during the year, and Erasmus students who can begin their programmes in either September or January/February, **the academic year starts in mid-September and finishes and the end of June (thus a student can only start in September).**

**Classes are spread over two terms:** the first term starts in mid-September and finishes at the end of December, and is followed by an examination session spanning the first three weeks of January. The second term starts at the end of January and ends in mid-May. This is followed by an examination session throughout June.

A third session is held in the second half of August and the first week of September so that students can resit exams they did not pass the first time.

# Language courses



All students, researchers and lecturers can take advantage of language courses at [the UCLouvain Language Institute \(Institut des langues vivantes, ILV\)](#).

Individuals who want to improve their French can register for French classes at the UCLouvain Language Institute (Institut des langues vivantes, ILV). Moreover, the university, in collaboration with the Louvain Language Centre (Centre de Langues de Louvain, CLL), offers intensive French summer and winter holiday programmes specially designed for international students. [More information on learning languages.](#)

The ILV teaches 15 languages: German, English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, French, Modern Greek, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Portuguese, Russian, Slovenian, Turkish and Belgian French sign language.

[Erasmus+ exchange students](#) can improve their knowledge of French before they arrive by taking a free interactive French course offered by the **[Online Linguistic Support \(OLS\) system](#)**. Students should contact their home university for more information.

Students can also improve their French by joining one of the student organisations that offer language-based conversation groups and knowledge exchange and writing activities.

Students, researchers and lecturers can also take advantage of **CLL Language Centre**, which offer several language courses, including intensive French language courses and a series of educational activities to learn about Belgian and French-speaking culture. CLL Language Centres are located in Louvain-la-Neuve, central Brussels, Brussels Woluwe, Namur and Liège. Complete information is available at [CLL Language Centres](#).

# Internet/Wifi



All students and staff are entitled to a UCLouvain email address and access to computer labs and libraries. Moreover, all UCLouvain accommodations are equipped with a cable television connection with internet access.

The university also provides a **uniform wireless network** using the latest security and ID technology for universal use. WIFI service covers all lecture rooms, teaching rooms and libraries, plus meeting rooms and other areas. Access conditions are identical for every building.

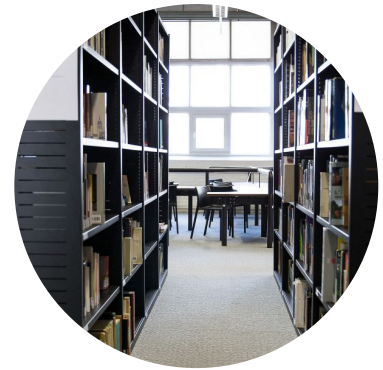
In addition, UCLouvain is a partner in **the Eduroam project**, permitting transparent access to the wireless networks of all partner universities. This covers a great many universities throughout Europe.

**Check out the [rapid configuration guides](#).**

In case of problems/questions, contact the Service Desk by phone from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm weekdays at 010/47.82.82, or by email at [8282@uclouvain.be](mailto:8282@uclouvain.be).

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# Libraries



The UCLouvain staff card or the UCLouvain student access card entitles its holder to free access and borrowing privileges at all UCLouvain libraries and learning commons.

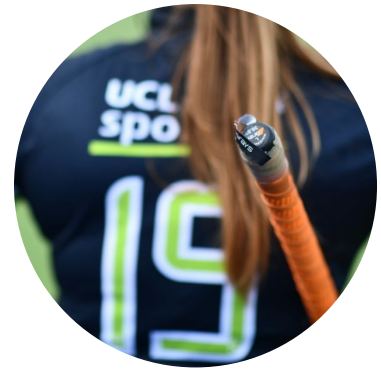
UCLouvain libraries hold 1.5 million books and 3,500 current paper journals, in addition to the resources located in research laboratories and specialised centres with subject-specific source documents.

UCLouvain libraries offer access through their portal to more than 30,000 e-journals from all the major scientific publishers, as well as 80,000 e-books and some 100 bibliographical and factual databases, such as Bloomberg/Macrobond, Scopus and SciFinder. Paper and electronic resources are easily accessible on site as well as off-site through [the Libellule library portal](#). In addition, [Discovery](#) helps users browse and search, via a single interface, all UCL print and digital holdings, databases and external references.

In addition, UCLouvain offers [DIAL \(Digital Access to Libraries\)](#), a digital consultation and long-term storage tool for UCLouvain and partner institution research publications. Digital versions of all research publications are definitively stored, and their online promotion and dissemination is assured. The institutional repository is flexible enough to host heterogeneous content and allow varied access and use. The main purpose of DIAL is offering the full publication text, not just bibliographic references.

Need help? Ninety trained librarians are on hand to help users in their reference work and literature search.

# Sport



The UCLouvain Sport and Fitness Service offers more than 100 sports and fitness activities as well as modern fitness facilities. Gifted athletes can join the university teams (the Wolves) and compete at inter-university level. Louvain-la-Neuve is home to French-speaking Belgium's largest sport and fitness centre: 25 sports rooms, 1 indoor fitness room, an indoor athletics track, 2 pools and 3 hectares of outside pitches which include 1 outdoor fitness area.

All students can register for the Sport Card, which for an affordable price (only 30 euros for exchange students) provides access to all activities mentioned in the Sport and Fitness Service programme as well as sport-related insurance.

Researchers and lecturers can access sport and fitness activities by registering for the ASPU Card.

Belgian health insurance agencies (*'mutuelles'*) might reimburse the cost of the card.

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**Culture**



Theatre, cinema, concerts, shows, exhibitions, conferences – cultural activities abound at UCLouvain and throughout Wallonia and Brussels. Each year,<sup>2</sup> UCLouvain features a cultural season and hosts an artist-in-residence.

For all students, **Culture Card provides free or low-cost access** to cultural activities in conjunction with some 100 cultural partners. Culture Card is free (it is included in the Student card)

Researchers and lecturers enjoy advantages for cultural activities via their UCLouvain Staff Card.

And students, researchers and lecturers can contact the UCLouvain Culture service to:

- Get advice on organising a cultural project;
- Apply for project funding;
- Find a venue for an event;
- Practice an art form;
- Advertise an event as part of UCLouvain's cultural agenda;
- Participate in UCLouvain's thematic season;
- Learn more about Culture Card benefits.

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# University restaurant service



The University Restaurant Service offers healthy, balanced meals designed in collaboration with a nutritionist for maximum benefit to students and staff.

Self-service restaurants offer daily specials, pastas, and snacks at reasonable prices:

- Louvain-la-Neuve: [Le Sablon](#) and [Le Galilée](#)
- Brussels Woluwe: [Le Martin V](#)
- Mons: [La Bascule](#)

In addition, sandwich shops offer reasonably priced fresh homemade sandwiches, soups, desserts, and salads:

- Louvain-la-Neuve: [D'un Pain à l'Autre](#)
- Brussels Woluwe: [D'un Pain à l'Autre](#)

A catering service is also available in Brussels Woluwe, Louvain-La-Neuve, Mons.



# Student activities



The university encourages student involvement in extracurricular activities, whether social, sport, environmental or cultural, and provides venues, equipment and subsidies. Student associations have formed around four types of activities:

- Student representation is assured by the Louvain Student General Assembly (AGL) at the university level;
- student offices at the faculty level;
- and the General Coordination of International Students (CGEI).

An original idea that involves students sharing a flat and working together on a social, cultural or sport-related project in which they have a special interest, the so-called 'kots à projet' are home to nearly a thousand students each year.

Regional organisations ('Les Régionales') reunite students of the same geographical region and promote their local folklore on campus.

Faculty groups ('Les Cercles') bring together students of the same faculty.

# Student support



The university cares about its students. This includes physical health and psychological well-being in every context: the classroom, the laboratory, accommodation, social life.

Whenever students encounter difficulties that hinder their studies or personal life, they should contact the university's Student Support Service. Dedicated teams of some 50 professionals – social workers, doctors, psychologists and nurses – are ready to help. Whatever difficulty they may be experiencing, they can ask any question or confide any problem. For example :

- Finding it difficult to adapt to student life?
- Having trouble financing studies?
- Dealing with a disability that requires specific support?
- Questioning choice of studies or educational direction?
- Experiencing family, relationship, flatmate or personal difficulties?
- Suffering from a health, stress, diet, sleep, alcohol, drug, mood, sexual or any other issue?

Students should not hesitate to contact the [Student Support Service](#).

# Persons with disabilities



UCLouvain is committed to supporting persons with disabilities to pursue their higher education dreams.

Any UCLouvain student with a disability, severe illness or learning disorder can apply for the status of a 'Student with a specific profile', or, using the French acronym, 'PEPS' status. PEPS status assists students with disabilities to pursue an academic programme of study with all the necessary support, including what's most important: an inclusive environment. Academic demands and degree value are identical to those of any other UCLouvain student, but learning and daily living arrangements, such as accommodation, are adapted not only to meet the student's specific needs but to help the student thrive. (PEPS status also applies to high-level athletes, artists and entrepreneurs.)

**The 'Aide Handi Unit'**, part of UCLouvain's Student Support Office, supports students with a disability. Students can make an appointment with a social worker, who will help answer all their questions about everyday life. A psychologist also coordinates educational support.

Aide Handi professionals inform disabled persons about specific services, organise welcome events and educational assistance, and provide information on study choices, ensuring that tailor-made teaching aids are supplied and helping the student gradually acquire a working method that meets academic requirements. They can also provide information about financing studies and discuss health-related challenges.

[More information \(fr\)](#)

# Religion / Spirituality



While the 'C' stands for 'Catholic', UCLouvain, with its more than 120 nationalities, includes just about every creed, secular or religious, practising or not.

Students, researchers, faculty and staff are Muslims, Jews, Protestants and other Christians (including Catholics), Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, agnostics and other persons who would describe themselves in any number of ways.

Louvain-la-Neuve is home to a mosque and Islamic cultural centre as well as a Protestant church. Brussels Woluwe hosts an ecumenical centre.

# Insurance offered by the university



## For students :

Students enrolled at UCLouvain benefit from accident cover while pursuing academic activities (including when travelling between accommodation and the university, during study trips and internships, etc.) and third-party liability cover while they are pursuing academic activities. There is no coverage providing emergency assistance relating to any accidents that happen in Belgium (repatriation to home country in the event of an accident). This kind of insurance must be taken out privately.

Concerning exchange students, their home university should continue to insure them against accidents and against the consequences of third-party liability while they are pursuing academic activities. Therefore they should contact their university to find out the limitations of its insurance policies.

## For researchers and lecturers :

The university subscribes to many insurance policies for its staff:

Group insurance, workplace accident insurance, complementary health insurance, university-organised athletic activities, liability insurance, work-related property damage insurance, comprehensive fire insurance, comprehensive electronic and laboratory insurance, auto insurance, civil liability insurance, objective liability fire and explosion insurance, objective liability human experimentation insurance, third-party agreements (research agreements, equipment use, etc.).

For more information, visit the intranet page ['Working at UCL'](#).

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University life

# Intellectual property law



Ownership of research conducted at UCLouvain by PhD students, researchers and lecturers is governed by UCLouvain intellectual property and copyright regulations and Belgian intellectual property law. Intellectual property protection covers copyright, patents, trademarks and corporate names.

Researchers and lecturers should consult the related [steps involved in contract signing](#).

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# UCLouvain emergency and security numbers



For emergencies:

- In Louvain-la-Neuve: **010 47 22 22**
- In all other UCLouvain locations: first dial **112**, then : **010 47 22 22**

To report suspicious, malicious, disturbing, noisy or violent behaviour (fights), theft, inappropriately open doors or windows, damaged or degraded public infrastructure, or some other security concern:

- In Louvain-la-Neuve and Charleroi: **010 47 24 24**
- In Brussels Woluwe and Brussels Saint-Gilles: **02 764 93 93**
- In Mons: **06 532 35 55**



# When you arrive

**When you arrive**

# Find your accommodation



## Students

- If you reserved UCLouvain accommodation in advance, report to [the Accommodation Office](#) with the following documents:

- UCLouvain admission documents;
- (photocopy) of identification document;
- An international bank account number (with complete data: IBAN number, BIC/SWIFT code, bank name and address, other useful codes depending on your home country).

You will sign a lease agreement and be informed of the rental conditions (appendix of the lease agreement).

You will have to pay a security deposit, administrative fees, and first month's rent. You will then receive the keys and a date will be fixed for an entry inventory of the accommodation.

The accommodations have neither bed linens or crockery but kits are available at the Accommodation Office.

## More information

- If you plan to look for private accommodation upon arrival, the Accommodation Office can provide you with both short-term (hotels and hostels) and long-term (private owners and property agencies) accommodation information. Useful links on the webpage [Alternatives to UCLouvain accommodation](#). A recommended solution is the [Kaleo Youth hostel in Louvain-la-Neuve](#).

**When you arrive**

# Find your accommodation



- If you did not reserve UCL accommodation in advance but want to apply for it, report to the Accommodation Office. Staff will provide you with short-term accommodation information (hotels and hostels). You may be asked to return daily and possibly be placed on a waiting list. If this is not desired or possible, staff can also provide you with long-term private accommodation information.

**Researchers and lecturers :**

See '[Accommodation](#)' in the 'Practical information' section above.

# Enrol at the University



## Bachelor's and master's students

Bachelor's and master's students must enrol in two places, in the following order:

### 1. Enrol at the university

You must confirm your admission by following the instructions indicated in the admission letter you have received at home. The procedure varies depending your situation. If the admission letter instructs to register at the Enrolment Office, you must bring your signed and dated admission letter and all required documents: diplomas, transcripts, passport, study visa (ASP), financing plan and proof of financial support. However, if the file is judged to already be complete, you may only be asked to send your dated and signed admission letter to validate your enrolment. During validation of your enrolment, you will have the opportunity to sign up for sport and fitness activities and for the Culture Card and the Solidarity Card.

Upon enrolment you will receive by post:

- a tuition fee invoice;
- a provisional student card (which is confirmation of your enrolment);
- a public transport certificate.

After paying the tuition fee invoice, you will receive by post your definitive UCLouvain student card, which grants you access to libraries, sport centres, and certain buildings and to obtain discounts in certain shops and cinemas.

# Enrol at the University



You will also receive in your virtual office the following certificates:

- a certificate that allows you to join a health insurance agency (a 'mutuelle');
- a certificate proving you are a student, for submission to the municipality ('Administration communale' or simply 'commune', located in the town hall) in which you reside;
- a family allowance certificate, if relevant.

From the moment of your enrolment at UCLouvain, you are covered for physical accidents that may happen within the strict framework of your academic activities. Please note the enrolment deadline is 30 September.

More information at the [Enrolment Office](#).

## 2. Enrol in your faculty

Go to the office of your faculty secretary to complete a faculty enrolment form, which must be submitted by the end of the second week of classes.

**Please note** : Late enrolment – after 30 September – requires written faculty authorisation.

### Exchange students

Exchange student registration is taken care of prior to their arrival in Belgium. On arrival, contact your faculty or school for information on your study programme, welcome and orientation meetings. More [information](#).

### PhD Students

For PhD students, as applications for admission can be submitted at any time during the year, there are no enrolment deadlines. More [information](#).

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When you arrive

# Sign employment contract



**Employed researchers and lecturers** must read the relevant regulations and prepare the documents required at contract signing (see the ["Working at UCLouvain"](#) intranet pages).

**When you arrive**

# Register with your commune



Registration with the commune is compulsory for stays of more than three months.

**If you are not an EU national:**

Within eight days of your arrival in Belgium, you must begin the process of registering with the municipality, or commune, in which you reside. Report to the commune's Foreigners Department (Service des Etrangers) with:

- your identification card or passport and visa;
- your accommodation lease;
- one passport-type photo.

In the days that follow the police will visit you at your residence to verify your address. You will then return to the Foreigners Department with documents specified by your commune in order to complete the registration process, for which the commune will charge €18.

When the commune completes the registration process, it sends you a Registered Foreigner Certificate (Certificat d'Inscription au Registre des Etrangers).

**If you are an EU national:**

- Within eight days of your arrival in Belgium, you must register with the local government administration of the commune in which you reside, by reporting to its Foreigners Department (Service des Etrangers) with documents specified by the commune, which will charge a fee. In the days that follow the police will visit you at your residence to verify your address.
- When the commune completes the registration process, it sends you a Registered Foreigner Certificate (Certificat d'Inscription au Registre des Etrangers).



# Open a bank account



As mentioned in 'Bank accounts' in the 'Practical Information' chapter above, before you leave your home country check with your bank to see if it has a partner in Belgium.

Opening an account requires the following documents:

- passport or identification card;
- proof of residence in Belgium (a lease with Belgian address);
- for students, proof of university enrolment; for UCLouvain employees, an employment contract.

Be advised that certain banks will also request proof of registration with the municipality ('commune').

**UCLouvain**

À votre arrivée

# Health exam



Foreign students who enrol for the first time at UCLouvain and who have lived in a country where tuberculosis is endemic (mostly Africa, South America, Asia and Eastern Europe) are required to undergo a health exam by the student doctor before 15 December.

Other students don't have to undergo a health exam.

More information : [Student support office](#) (FR)

When you arrive

# Register with a health insurance agency



Students who are not EU citizens are required to register with a health insurance agency ('mutuelle'), which partially covers **the cost of care, drugs and hospitalisation**. To find a nearby office, consult their websites :

- <http://www.solidaris.be>
- <http://www.mloz.be>
- <http://www.mutualites-neutres.be>
- <http://www.ml.be>

While registering with a mutuelle is not a requirement for EU citizen students, who must show proof of coverage in their home country and provide form E 111, E 109 or E 128, or for some grant-assisted students whose funding organisation provides partial coverage, the university nevertheless advises these students to register with a Belgian health insurance agency to complement their existing coverage. To do so, students must be enrolled at the university and present the specific certificate provided by the university for health agency registration.