

2015 OAS/VUB Scholarship Program **Frequently Asked Questions**

Scholarship Application Process:

If I am offered an OAS-VUB scholarship will the OAS complete and submit the application documentation for admission to the university on my behalf?

No, you apply first to the OAS and, after being selected for the OAS-VUB PhD scholarship, you are responsible for completing and submitting your own application form and other required documents to VUB. The application for admission fee will be waived for those candidates who are pre-selected to receive the scholarship. You will be required to send any additional documents that the university requires and that were not submitted to the OAS. You will receive all instructions by email from VUB.

If my research topic is not included in list found in the scholarship announcement can I submit my own topic?

When applying for the scholarship you are required to select at least two (2) research areas listed in the announcement. The research area of interest does not need to be exactly formulated as those provided by the university. It can be closely related to them. You can also propose your own topic and it will be taken into consideration by the university. This possibility, however, decreases the odds of obtaining a scholarship as it is contingent to the availability of a supervisor to oversee your proposed research topic.

Application for Admission Process:

What is the admission process after I have been pre-selected for the scholarship?

After being pre-selected by OAS, your file is automatically transmitted to VUB. The International Office of VUB will send your file to the respective faculty for evaluation and selection. After which, the supervisor will contact you to conduct an on-line interview to determine your knowledge of English and the research domain.

Cost of Ph.D. Studies:

Does the OAS-VUB scholarship cover all cost of PhD studies?

No. The OAS-VUB scholarship covers application fee, tuition, supervisor fee, health insurance, and repatriation cost for the 4 years of study. All other costs not covered by the scholarship will be covered by the student such as: living accommodation (housing and meals, immigration process, airfare, etc.) You should seek additional sources of funding to cover these costs.

The OAS-VUB scholarship will cover the cost of research if it is conducted onsite at the university. Students who wish to pursue research outside the university must discuss this issue with the supervisor, as well as coverage of the cost related to offsite research. .

Research:

Are students required to conduct research only in Belgium? Will I be able to do the last 2 years of the program back home?

Students are expected to conduct research at the university under the guidance of a supervisor. It is possible for a student to conduct research in his/her home country or another country. This must be agreed upon with the VUB-supervisor. However the student will have to find a local supervisor with the expertise in the field of the research topic to oversee it. This supervisor can be a professor at a local university or an expert working with an NGO with whom VUB can establish a partnership. While conducting research abroad, annual registration at VUB is necessary, as well as submission of an annual progress report.

Subsistence:

What is the estimated amount of money needed monthly to live in Brussels?

*In principle a student must have sufficient means of subsistence to cover living costs, study and research costs. The minimum amount needed is fixed and indexed every year by royal decree. It is currently **614 Euros** net per month (academic year 2014-2015). Although this is the minimum amount to obtain a visa, the monthly cost of living in Brussels is approximately 1000 Euros per month.*

How can I prove that I have the means to cover cost of living in Brussels?

There are 2 ways that you can prove that you are capable of supporting yourself while studying in Brussels:

- *Document showing that you have received another scholarship, a loan, or a grant issued by an international organization or a national authority, or a legal person, Belgian or foreign, with sufficient resources. The amount of the said grant or loan may not be below the minimum amount which a student must have every month as stated in the royal decree. If necessary, the student must produce proof of complementary resources; OR*
- *Document submitted by a guarantor: the guarantor is, any person (physical or legal, Belgian or foreign) that takes a commitment that charge will be taken and demonstrates that they have sufficient resources to take over responsibility for a student for one academic year or for the entire duration of the studies envisaged. If you have sufficient financial means yourself, then you will still need a guarantor, even though he/she will not have to pay for your studies and your stay abroad. This is a safety net in case you get financial difficulty.*

Any other type of proof of funds will not be considered, including proof of your own savings.

If a person agrees to sponsor me for the duration of my studies, what documents showing commitment should be submitted and to whom?

A document may be obtained by the guarantor from the authorities in Belgium if the person is a citizen or resident of the country. If the person does not reside in Belgium, he/she may request the document from the embassy or consulate responsible for his/her country of residence.

The guarantor will also have to provide a bank statement or document indicating other sources of revenue showing the total minimum amount of 1507 EUR (604 EUR required for the student and an additional 973 EUR monthly for him/herself).

The commitment becomes effective on the date that the sponsor signs the document.

Employment while studying:

Can I or a dependent get a part-time job?

You and your dependents are not prevented from working, provided that the labor laws of Belgium allow it and are respected. After obtaining a Belgian ID, which can take several months, you will have to apply for a work permit; therefore, it will not be possible to work during the first semester at VUB.

Travel:

Will the OAS and/or VUB help me get the U.S. visa?

You are responsible for obtaining the student visa. Visit the nearest Belgian embassy or consulate for more information on the procedure to request a student visa. The OAS and VUB will not cover or reimburse fees associated with the process of securing a visa and airfare to Belgium. These costs are the sole responsibility of the student.

Does the OAS and/or VUB provide help finding accommodation?

You are responsible for securing your accommodations as well as the costs associated with your accommodations. You have the option of staying on campus or away from campus, depending on availability. The International Office of VUB will provide you with housing information once you are selected for a PhD scholarship.

Will the OAS and VUB issue a letter of support to ensure that I get the student visa?

The OAS will only issue you Scholarship Acceptance Form which explains the terms and conditions of your scholarship. VUB will also give you an admission letter, after registering in the VUB on-line system, to include with the documents you submit to the embassy, or in some countries the consulate, as well as communicate your name to the Belgian embassy to notify them of your impending visa application.

The OAS-VUB scholarship is complementary; therefore, it is not meant to cover all of the expenses you will incur during your studies. The OAS and VUB will take no responsibility for your finances.

Do I need to apply for a visa each year?

The visa will allow entrance into the country. Once you have arrived in Belgium, you have to register at the commune where your student room is located and apply for a Belgian ID, which is valid for 1 academic year. The ID can be renewed annually by submitting proof of registration at VUB for the following year. There is no need to apply for a visa again, unless you forget to renew your Belgian ID at the end of the academic year or if you are abroad and cannot renew it before the expiration date. You need to be physically present in Belgium to renew your ID. The International Office of VUB will guide you through this process.

Dependents

Am I allowed to bring my family with me?

You can take your dependent family members with you to Belgium. You will be solely responsible for their wellbeing. You will be required to secure additional health insurance, repatriation, and cover their cost of living. VUB has no student rooms for families. Since you will have to look for housing in the private sector, it is best to come by yourself, get all administration in order, and take some time to find suitable housing before bringing your dependent family members to Belgium.

Please note that if you have dependent(s) that will be staying with you in Belgium, the guarantor will have to add 150 EUR monthly per dependent to the minimum total amount that he/she is required to have at his/her disposal.

End of Scholarship

Can I decline my OAS-VUB Scholarship?

You may decline your scholarship at any time prior to the start of your program of study. Please do so as early in the process as possible so that the next ranked candidate can take advantage of the scholarship opportunity.