GENERAL CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURE FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

Please read our General Conditions and Procedure carefully.

APPLICATION

Blocked account applications for obtaining a visa can be made as from 1 April 2021 until 31 July 2021. Blocked account applications for residence permit extension can be made as from 1 August 2021.

Depending on the number of applications received by VUB, it can take up to four weeks to set up the blocked account and allow the money transfer to be made.

AMOUNT TO BE DEPOSITED

The amounts to be deposited vary depending on the purpose which you will use the solvency certificate for (visa or residence permit renewal).

The amount single students are expected to transfer as per VUB-regulation is 800 EUR multiplied by the number of months for a short stay or 10,400 EUR (visa – 13 months stay)/9,600 EUR (residence permit – 12 months stay) for one academic year.

For a family (reunion), the amounts are 1,600 EUR (short stay) or 20,800 EUR (visa – 13 months stay)/19,200 EUR (residence permit – 12 months stay) for one academic year respectively.

These amounts are non-negotiable.

No additional funds (e.g. tuition fees) are accepted, as this system is only a procedure intended for obtaining the visa and residence permit.

Please note that the Belgian Federal government can decide in the near future to raise the amounts of the financial solvency to the level of the Belgian living wages. If decided, VUB will have no other choice than to apply this new legislation. It is possible that the government decides on a transition year to exempt ongoing transactions from sudden changes. Any new information will be disclosed on this page. Students who started the procedure of the blocked account will be informed individually by email.

Blocked account money is destined for living expenses only, not for tuition fees.

After having submitted your application, you will be informed on the next steps to take on how to transfer the money.

Please be aware that it can take a while before the money arrives on the VUB-account.
Failure to mention the correct reference (blocked account VOPA31 – your name – your student number\(^1\)) when making the money transfer will result in major delays.

If the uploaded proof of payment is insufficient (reference is missing) or not clearly legible (characters other than Western), the payment will not be taken into account.

VUB will only accept deposits made in one single transaction.

**CONFIRMATION**

After confirmation that the required amount has arrived on the VUB account, the student will receive the solvency certificate for the embassy (new student) or the municipal administration (renewal of the identity card).

Students who wish a softcopy to be sent by the International Relations office to the embassy need to fill in the field “Email address of the Embassy” in the workflow (Blocked Account Online tool). However, please note that some embassies only accept documents from the student, not from the university.

**We do not provide any follow up regarding the student’s visa application status.**

We will only send “Blocked Account Certificates” and no other documents such as scans of “Admission Letters”.

**PAYMENT AND REFUND BY MONTHLY INSTALMENTS**

As previously stated, we are now diversifying depending on the purpose which you will use the solvency certificate for (visa or residence permit renewal).

Single students who have a blocked account for visa purposes will deposit 10,400 EUR for an entire academic year. They will receive 13 monthly instalments of 800 EUR from October 2021 until October 2022 included. By doing so, the student will receive a residence permit valid until 31 October 2022.

Single students who have a blocked account for residence permit renewal will deposit 9,600 EUR for an entire academic year. They will receive 12 monthly instalments of 800 EUR from November 2021 until October 2022 included. By doing so, the student will receive a new residence permit valid until 31 October 2022.

Students with family who have a blocked account for visa purposes will deposit 20,800 EUR for an entire academic year. They will receive 13 installments of 1,600 EUR from October 2021 until October 2022 included. By doing so, the student and his/her family members will receive a residence permit valid until 31 October 2022.

Students with family who have a blocked account for residence permit renewal will deposit 19,200 EUR for an entire academic year. They will receive 12 installments of 1,600 EUR from November 2021 until October 2022 included. By doing so, the student and his/her family members will receive a new residence permit valid until 31 October 2022.

For a stay shorter than an academic year:
- Single students will deposit and receive 800 EUR x the number of months of their stay
- Students with family will deposit and receive 1,600 EUR x the number of months of their stay

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\(^1\) Student number is mentioned on the Conditional Letter of Acceptance, next to Reference.
VUB commits itself towards the Immigration authorities (DVZ) to pay a monthly amount of 800 EUR (single) or 1,600 EUR (family) to the student for the entire duration of the academic year. Therefore, we are not authorized to make any early refunds to the student, except for the first refund.

In order to help students manage the high installation cost and because some costs are being deducted from the first payment, VUB decided that this first payment would cover two months. In other words: if the student uses the blocked account to obtain a visa, VUB will pay the first instalment in October and it will cover October + November 2021. If the student has a blocked account for residence permit renewal, VUB will pay the first instalment in November and it will cover November and December 2021.

Upon arrival, the student is requested to open a Belgian bank account and to communicate the bank account number to IRMO. For security reasons, bank account numbers can only be communicated face-to-face at the welcome desk of the International Relations office (IRMO), and **NOT** electronically. Even if you have a blocked account for a second, third year, … it is necessary to register for SIP and to reconfirm your bank details to us in person.

You also have to show your passport/ID-card for the purpose of identification. Allowances can only be paid to the bank account number of the student, and **not** to the account of a third party.

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VUB will only be able to start refunding money as soon as the student is able to open a Belgian bank account. This can take several weeks\(^2\) and after that, the student will receive his/her first allowance **within the shortest possible delay**, depending on external circumstances (holidays, weekends, …). Therefore, we urge students to bring enough cash or a credit card to pay for the first month’s living costs, tuition fees, rent as well as the by the law prescribed two months’ rent deposit.

If the arrival of the student is delayed, the amount of the first payment will be the sum of the previous months.

The costs for the SIP insurance (Student Insurance Program) and the administrative cost are deducted in full, from the first payment.

**INSURANCE**

Stay shorter or equal to 6 months:
- Upon arrival, the student registers for a “SIP intégral” insurance (full coverage), which is managed by IRMO. This insurance is mandatory.

Stay longer than 6 months:
- Upon arrival, the student registers for the PARTENA health insurance and “SIP complémentaire” insurance (additional coverage), which are registered at the IRMO welcome desk. Both insurance schemes are mandatory.

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\(^2\) Banks will perform a background check and it might take several months before the bank account is opened.
The registration for a SIP insurance ("intégral" or "complémentaire") is done for the number of months of the stay as mentioned on the solvency certificate. No lump sum is charged. The actual amount of the premium is based on the type of insurance (full coverage or complementary to the health insurance) and the duration of stay.

In case of a family reunion request, the insurance is only compulsory for the student, not for the family but can be extended to the family members at the request of the student.

The amount of the premium is deducted from the first payment to the student (the monthly premium for a SIP "complémentaire" was approximately 24 EUR in 2020).

SIP insurance must be renewed at the start of each academic year.

No foreign insurances are accepted.

**ADMINISTRATION COST**

Students pay an annual administration fee of 150 EUR. The same rate also applies to short stays (exchange students, International Scholars, etc.) and extensions of stays due to unforeseen circumstances.

The administrative fee is a lump sum and covers, among other things, the work involved in issuing the solvency certificate, the bank costs of the international transfer, the monthly refunds, etc. The administration cost does not cover any losses due to exchange rate fluctuations.

The administration fee is 'non-refundable', under any circumstances.

**FAMILY REUNION**

Students can have their families join them but first, they must fully establish themselves in Belgium before their family can join them.

However, for technical reasons, students who are planning to apply for a family reunion later on, should choose for a blocked account as “family” when applying for their own student visa. They will be asked to transfer 20,800 EUR (or 19,200 EUR - see above) from the start and will receive 1,600 EUR per month.

Important: students cannot bring their family along straight away. Immigration laws only allow people travelling to Belgium in the framework of “economic migration” (a work visa) to bring along family members.

**RENEWAL OF THE RESIDENCE PERMIT (ID-CARD)**

The Immigration authorities will grant a residence permit till end of October. Please bear in mind that for the extension of the residence permit for the second year of study, a new certificate can only be issued providing another 9,600 EUR (or 19,200 EUR for a family) is transferred to the blocked account. The same applies for each subsequent year of study.

The new Belgian legislation obliges non-EEA students to initiate the extension procedure at the latest 15 days before the expiration date of their current residence permit. We strongly advise students to initiate the extension procedure 4 weeks before the expiration date of their current residence permit.

However, extension of the ID-card is not possible without the proclamation certificate of the previous academic year and the registration certificate for the next academic year.
EXTENSION OF A SHORT STAY BLOCKED ACCOUNT

A short stay blocked account can only be extended under specific circumstances.

CANCELLATION AND EARLY TERMINATION

In case of cancelation or early termination of the blocked account agreement the student will have to sign an agreement of termination and the Belgian Immigration authorities will be informed. In the event of early termination, the amount will be refunded to the account from which the amount originally came. Belgian Immigration authorities will be informed. In the event of early termination and if the student has a VUB student card and at least one payment has been made by VUB on the student's Belgian bank account, the student has the choice: either the remaining amount is refunded to the account from which the amount originally came, or it is transferred to the Belgian bank account. Belgian Immigration authorities will be informed.

VUB is not responsible for any losses of money in the event of a refund, as a result of exchange rate fluctuations. VUB does all transactions in EUR and losses due to exchange rate fluctuations are not reimbursed to the student or money provider.

In the event of early termination, even if no payment has been made yet, the SIP insurance premium cannot be reimbursed to the student, not even for the remaining months.

The administration fee is 'non-refundable', under any circumstances.

Refunding the money can take several months since the university is depending on external parties such as banks, etc...