GENERAL CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURE

There are significant changes compared to academic year 2018-2019!
Please read our General Conditions and Procedure carefully.

APPLICATION

*Blocked account applications for obtaining a visa can be made as from 1 April 2019 until 31 July 2019.*
*Blocked account applications for residence permit extension can be made as from 1 August 2019.*

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 amount students are expected to transfer as per VUB-regulation is **800 EUR** multiplied by the number of months for a short stay and **10,400 EUR** for one academic year.
For a family(reunion), these numbers amount to **1,600 EUR** and **20,800 EUR** respectively.
*These amounts are non-negotiable.*

No additional funds are accepted, as this system is only a procedure intended for obtaining the visa and residence permit.

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

After having submitted your application, your file will be evaluated. When positively advised, 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.

VUB will only accept deposits made in **one single transaction**.

\(^1\) Student number is mentioned on the Conditional Letter of Acceptance, next to Reference
CONFIRMATION

After confirmation that the total 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). Most embassies are satisfied with a softcopy of the certificate, but at the student’s request a hardcopy can be sent through courier service. Tick the box “Hardcopy requested” in the workflow (Blocked Account Online tool).

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 originals or scans of “Admission Letters”.

PAYMENT AND REFUND BY MONTHLY INSTALMENTS

Single students receive 13 monthly instalments of 800 EUR (13 x 800 = 10,400 EUR). Payments will start in October 2019 and will cover the period until October 2020 included. By doing so, the student will receive a residence permit valid until 31 October 2020. Students with family will deposit 20,800 EUR for an entire academic year. They will receive 13 instalments of 1,600 EUR from October 2019 until October 2020.

In case of residence permit extensions, the aim is also to receive an ID till October 2020. Therefore, the monthly instalments can differ from the ones mentioned above, depending on the renewal date of the ID. This will be communicated on individual basis.

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

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 month (installation cost).

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. You also have to show your passport for 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.

Students who have the blocked account for a second or third year, can send us an email to confirm that the bank account remains the same as the previous year, along with a copy of their ID-card/passport.
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, it will take between 10 and 14 days before the student receives his/her first allowance, 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 integral” insurance, 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, which are registered at the IRMO welcome desk. Both insurance schemes are mandatory.

The registration for a SIP insurance (“integral” or “complémentaire”) is done for the number of months of the stay as mentioned on the solvency certificate for the visa application. No lump sum is charged. The actual amount of the premium is based on the type of insurance (integral or complementary to the health insurance) and the duration of stay.

In case of a family reunion request, the insurance is not compulsory 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 (in 2018 the premium for a SIP complémentaire for one academic year amounted to 279 EUR).

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.), extensions of stays due to unforeseen circumstances and revisions of current agreements for students who wish to deposit a supplement for family reunion purpose in order to obtain the visa for the family members.

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\(^2\) Banks will perform a background check and it might take several months before the bank account is opened.
The administrative fee is a lump sum, and covers, among other things, the cost of sending the original solvency certificate by courier to the student’s home address, the bank costs of the international transfer when the student deposits the money or upon cancellation, the cost of the cash card. 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.**
For technical reasons, students who are planning to apply for a family reunion should apply for a blocked account as “family”. They will be asked to transfer 20,800 EUR 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 prolongation of the residence permit for the second year of study, a new certificate can only be issued providing another 10,400 EUR (or 20,800 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.

**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. Upon request for cancellation, a copy of the passport will be requested for identification. 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. Upon request for cancellation, a copy of the passport will be requested for identification. 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 insurance premium cannot be reimbursed to the student, not even for the remaining months.

The administration fee is 'non-refundable', under any circumstances.
Refunding your money can take several months since the university is depending on external parties such as banks, etc...