



VLIR-UOS SCHOLARSHIPS

Selection Procedure ICP- & ITP scholars

2018 ONWARDS



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Background

Scholarship guidelines

International Master Programmes (ICP) and **International Training Programmes** (ITP) are development relevant master and training courses, organized at a university or university college in Flanders and targeting participants from the global South. VLIR-UOS supports a number of selected ICPs and ITPs with funding from the Belgian ministry for development cooperation (DGD).

In addition, each ITP and ICP receives a number of scholarships. The scholarship allowances and regulations are defined by a generic scholarship guideline that is approved by DGD and applies to all Belgian actors that provide DGD-scholarships. VLIR-UOS translates this generic scholarship guideline into its own scholarship guidelines that can be downloaded from the [VLIR-UOS website](#).

Please note the VLIR-UOS scholarship guidelines and scholarship amounts for the different scholarship types can be adjusted at any time due to changes in the generic guideline.

Decentralized selection procedure

The selection of ICP- and ITP scholars is **decentralized** to the level of the programme organizers, but requires final approval of VLIR-UOS and DGD.

- **Candidate → Institution: direct submission.** The applicant submits the scholarship application directly to the higher education institution (HEI) / programme organizers. The institution can thus use its own (online) application system.
- **Institution → VLIR-UOS:** written procedure. The HEI / programme organizers assess the (scholarship) application and propose their selection to VLIR-UOS. VLIR-UOS validates the selection through a meta-check of the scholarship eligibility- and selection criteria.

Selection ICP- and ITP-scholarsⁱ

There are 5 stages in the selection procedure for which a number of criteria apply.



1. Academic admission

The organizing HEI is responsible for the academic selection of the scholarship participants of the ICP / ITP. They define the required academic criteria. Only candidates who are academically admitted, can receive a scholarship.

Candidates can never be selected for a scholarship and put on the AB-list if their

application does not fulfill all academic criteria. For example, if a candidate cannot provide a language certificate in line with the institution's regulations, he / she is not eligible for a scholarship and his/her details cannot (conditionally) be added to the AB-list. In no case he/she can be invited to travel to Belgium as a scholarship recipient.

2. Scholarship eligibility

There is a minimum set of VLIR-UOS / DGD criteria to which the candidates should comply in order to be eligible for a scholarship. The course organizers need to check whether the candidates meet each criterion. The criteria are to be applied very strictly, no exceptions are allowed:

- **Nationality:** the candidate should be a national and resident of one of the [31 eligible scholarship countries](#) at the moment of the application (not necessarily the same country).
- **Age:** The maximum age for an ICP candidate is 35 years for an initial masters and 40 years for an advanced masters. The candidate cannot succeed this age on January 1 of the intake year. There are no age limitations for ITP.
- **Professional experience and background:** VLIR-UOS gives **priority** to candidates who are employed in academic institutions, research institutes, governments, social economy or NGO's, or aim a career in one of these sectors. Candidates employed in the profit sector (ICP and ITP) or newly graduated candidates without any work experience (ICP) can be eligible for the scholarship if a **strong additional motivation is provided**.

The **ITP candidate should possess relevant professional experience** related to the training. The ITP candidate **should be employed** at the time of selection and should be able to proof that he/she will remain to be employed after the training (for example by a commitment letter of the employer).

- **Former scholarships awarded** (this criterion can only be checked by VLIR-UOS):

- The candidate can only apply and be selected for one VLIR-UOS scholarship per year, irrespectively of the scholarship type;
- The ICP candidate should not have been enrolled in a master programme (or equivalent) at a Belgian university before (with or without a scholarship);
- The ITP candidate who earlier received a VLIR-UOS scholarship to participate in another ITP will not be eligible;
- The ITP candidate who earlier received a VLIR-UOS scholarship to participate in an ICP (or vice versa) can only be selected if the previously attended course is thematically linked to the concerned ICP or ITP;
- The ICP or ITP candidate who earlier received a VLIR-UOS scholarship to participate in a Short Training Initiative (STI, in Dutch: KOI) can only be selected if the STI is thematically linked to the concerned ICP or ITP and if the link is clearly motivated.
- Candidates working in a university where VLIR-UOS-funded IUC, TEAM or SI projects are being organized, can receive a ITP-ICP scholarship if they clearly motivate the reason of their application and clarify why the participation at the ICP or ITP programme can't be funded as part of the IUC-, Team- or SI funds.

3. Scholarship selection

The course organizers select the scholarship awardees on the basis of an objective evaluation of their scholarship applications, and by evaluating all the scholarship selection criteria. The candidates who score best are proposed as effective scholarship participants (A-list) or as reserve candidates (B-list). The organizers should attempt to meet a gender balance amongst scholarship participants and provide at least half of the scholarships to students from Sub Sahara Africa and preferably half to applicants from OECD-DAC least developed and low income countries.

- **Motivation:** it is essential that the motivation and professional goals of the candidate highlight development relevant themes which are also pertinent to the course. Not only academic results are important, but also and especially the potential of the candidate to become an “actor of change” in his/her home country after the study or training.
- **Professional experience** (see also scholarship eligibility criteria): preference should be given to candidates that can demonstrate a higher possibility of generating impact after the programme. Candidates are expected to transfer acquired knowledge and realize extension activities in the home country (region), to address developmental problems or challenges of the country concerned.
- **Gender:** the selection team should aim at a relative balance between the number of male and female candidates awarded a VLIR-UOS scholarship, given that there are enough qualitative applications.
- **Regional Balance:** the selection team will aim at a diversification of candidates from different countries and continents. The selection team will also aim to award at least 50% of the available scholarships to candidates coming from Sub-Sahara Africa and preferably at least 50% from

Least Developed Countries or Other Low Income Countries (defined by OESO-DAC for ODA recipients)¹, given that there are sufficient qualitative candidates from these countries.

- **Social background:** in case of two equally qualified candidates, preference should be given to candidates who can demonstrate that they belong to a disadvantaged group or area within their country or an ethnic social minority group, especially when these candidates can provide proof of leadership potential.
- **Priority** should be given to candidates who did not receive a scholarship to study in a developed country before. ICP candidates who earlier received a scholarship to obtain a master degree in a developed country can only exceptionally be selected for the scholarship and only for well-argued reasons.

Additional selection information:

- A candidate with a double nationality can only be selected for the scholarship if the candidate lives and works in a country of the country list.
- Pregnant women can postpone their scholarship award for max. 1 intake year. Pregnant scholars cannot be refused at subscription.
- Candidates cannot be refused because of a difficult situation in their home country.
- In case two selected candidates are partners, both candidates can receive a scholarship.

4. Validation by VLIR-UOS

VLIR-UOS validates the selection on the basis of a list of proposed candidates and reserve candidates, the AB-list (template can be downloaded via the [VLIR-UOs website](#)). This list should be submitted to VLIR-UOS on **30 April latest for an ICP and at least 3 months before the start of the training** course in case of an ITP. The programme organizers submit the AB-list through e-mail to scholarships@vliruos.be. VLIR-UOS commits to validate the list of participants within 10 working days after submission.

AB-list

1. Overview: Total number of applications (eligible and non-eligible) and number of eligible applications (Tab 1).
2. A-candidates and B-candidates: overview of nominated scholarship candidates (A) and overview of nominated candidates on the waiting list (B), both ranked according to priority. The number of reserve candidates should not exceed the number of effective candidates (minimum 5 – maximum 12) (Tab 2).

VLIR-UOS does not require paper records / application files of candidates, but reserves the right to request these on random basis.

Refusal of candidates

¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20of%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20final.pdf>

VLIR-UOS reserves the right to refuse nominated candidates in case:

- The candidate was already selected for another VLIR-UOS scholarship (during the same intake year).
- The candidate submitted (in the same year or previous years) scholarship applications which were not thematically linked to the current course (the so-called “shoppers”).
- The candidate has been excluded in the past by VLIR-UOS for further participation in the scholarship award programme.
- Participation in an ITP or ICP programme was previously cancelled last minute and /or without clear argumentation.
- The applicant does not meet the eligibility and/or selection criteria for the scholarship.

In case VLIR-UOS has questions about or comments on the selection, the programme will be informed and requested to provide additional information.

If one or more nominated candidates from the A-list would be refused for a VLIR-UOS scholarship, the programme will choose the most adequate candidates from the B-list to replace the refused candidate(s).

If one or more nominated candidates from the B-list would be refused for a VLIR-UOS scholarship, the programme can (if desired) nominate additional candidates to supplement the B-list.

Validation of selection

If there are no further questions about or comments on the selection, VLIR-UOS will validate the list of candidates and send a confirmation to the programme organizers.

5. Inform DGD / validation by DGD

VLIR-UOS sends a selection report with a list of validated candidates (effective and reserve candidates) to DGD.

Follow-up of selected scholarship participants

1. Communication of selection results

Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

- Feedback to the nominated candidates (A- and B-list):
 - A-list: email with scholarship letter, reply form, further instructions visa application
 - B-list: email with selection result
- A-list candidates are requested to send a reply form and copy of their passport to VLIR-UOS (scholarships@vliruos.be) and to a representative of the programme. Based on the documents they provide us with, VLIR-UOS double-checks all info in the AB-list Excel file (e.g. correct spelling, full name as mentioned in passport, full address, valid passport number).

Responsibilities of the programme

- Feedback to the candidates who were not selected for the scholarship.

2. Preparation of arrival of participants

Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

- Once all selected candidates responded and all necessary information is available, VLIR-UOS uploads the Excel file with of the A- and B-list candidates to the database.
- VLIR-UOS is responsible for initiating the visa process and providing the scholars with the necessary supporting documents. VLIR-UOS scholarship awardees qualify for a short track visa procedure and are exempted from paying visa fees to the Belgian embassy. To enable this, VLIR-UOS prepares a specific document ('DGD-certificate') and sends this to the relevant diplomatic post abroad.
- VLIR-UOS sends visa application instructions as well as scholarship certificates and standard proof of scholarships to the programme organizers the moment the diplomatic posts have received the DGD certificates. The programme organisers send the necessary documents to the scholars, so they can start their visa application (see further).
- In case there are any problems related to the visa application process, VLIR-UOS can be contacted and will get in touch with the diplomatic post and/or DVZ dealing with the application.
- VLIR-UOS prepares the scholarship contracts for the new scholars and (if relevant) for the second year students and delivers them to the programme organizers through email.

Responsibilities of the course organizers and/or ICOS

- Book flights for the scholarship participants.

- Obtain the necessary insurance for the scholars: travel and medical insurance with a minimum coverage of € 30.000, valid in the whole Schengen area (=Schengen obligation) and covering the entire stay in Schengen (and preferably + 15 extra days).
- Inform the scholars the moment they can start their visa application and send along the scholarship certificates, proof of scholarship, insurance certificate, proof of academic admission (if relevant), letter of invitation, information on accommodation (if available).
- Reception of the scholars upon arrival in the location of the course and follow-up of the candidates during their stay in Belgium. These responsibilities include but are not limited to: providing suitable accommodation, registration at the higher education institution (if applicable) and other administrative issues, handing out the scholarship contracts and informing the scholar about the right and duties as a scholarship awardee.
- The HEI/course organizers are also the central point of contact concerning the communication with internal services of the HEI (for example: scholarship payments).

3. Procedure in case a scholarship awardee does not accept the scholarship

In case an **ICP scholar** does not accept the scholarship or decides to leave the course prematurely, the following actions should be taken:

- In case this happens before 1st of October of the intake year, the best qualified candidate on the waiting list can be contacted
- In case this happens between 1st of October and 15th of October of the intake year, a candidate on the waiting list can be contacted, taking into account
 - (i) He/she has the best chance of succeeding the course, given the classes that have been missed already
 - (ii) The visa application procedure differs per country and can entail a more lengthy process. The candidate who has the biggest chance to obtain the visa within a reasonable time, will be contacted.
- In case this happens after 15th of October, no reserve candidate will be contacted.

Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

- VLIR-UOS sends the new scholar an email with the selection results and necessary annexes, and starts the visa procedure once the scholar has accepted the scholarship.

Responsibilities of the organizers

- The course organizers inform VLIR-UOS which candidate from the reserve list should be contacted;
- Cancellation of the flight booking / made travel arrangements of the person who cancels the scholarship and make a flight booking or other travel arrangements and organize insurance for the new scholarship participant.

In case an **ITP scholar** does not accept the scholarship or decides to leave the course prematurely, the following actions should be taken:

- In case this happens at least 4 weeks before the start of the programme, the best qualified candidate on the waiting list can be contacted.
- In case this happens less than 4 weeks and up to 2 weeks before the start of the programme, a candidate on the waiting list can be called upon, taking into account (i) he/she has the best chance of succeeding the course, given the classes that have been missed already (ii) the visa application procedure differs per country and can entail a more lengthy process so the candidate who has the biggest chance to obtain the visa within a reasonable time, can be contacted.
- In case this happens less than 2 weeks before the start of the classes, no reserve candidate will be contacted.

Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

- VLIR-UOS sends the new scholar an email with the selection results and necessary annexes, and starts the visa procedure once the scholar has accepted the scholarship.

Responsibilities of the organizers

- The course organizers inform VLIR-UOS which candidate from the reserve list should be contacted;
- Cancellation of the flight booking / made travel arrangements of the person who cancels the scholarship and make a flight booking or other travel arrangements and organize insurance for the new scholarship participant.

Non eligibility after cancellation

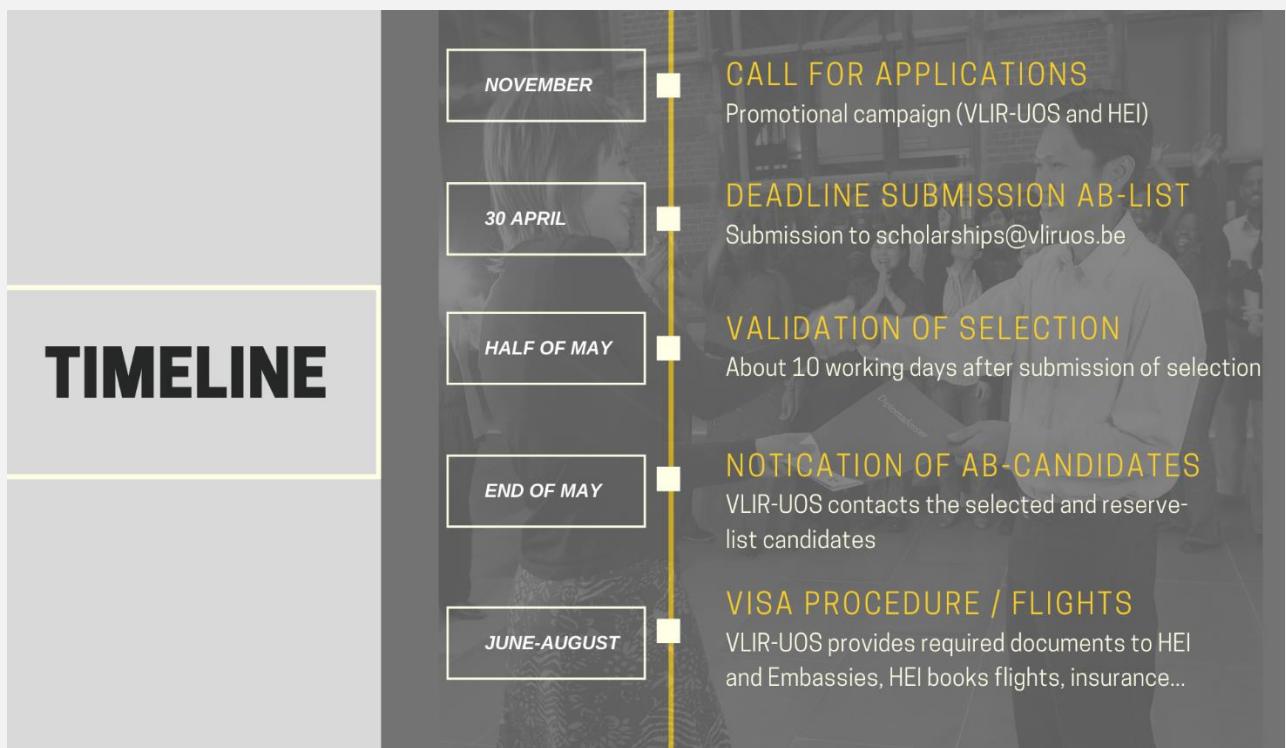
In case a scholarship awardee cancels the scholarship for non-medical reasons and last minute (meaning the scholarship can no longer be awarded to a reserve candidate), **this person will no longer be eligible to be awarded a VLIR-UOS-scholarship**.

Non-mandatory rules about who replaces who

The ranking of the candidates on the waiting list is according to priority. However, it is possible to give priority to a lower ranked person on the waiting list, in order to maintain a regional and/or gender balance and/or in order to have a greater chance to receive a visa in a timely manner.

Timing

The timetable below takes into account the deadline for submission of the scholarship selection for **ICP programmes** (April 30). The deadline for submission of the scholarship selection for an ITP is at least **3 months prior to the start of the ITP**. Since the selection is decentralized to the HEIs, the programmes can also decide to work with a different (earlier) timing for academic and scholarship selection, as long as VLIR-UOS deadlines are respected.



ⁱ Version 22/01/2020