



# Selection Procedure ICP Scholars

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# Background

## Scholarship guidelines

**ICP Connect study programmes are accredited international study programmes.** ICPs are programmes organised at a university or university of applied sciences and arts in Flanders, on a subject relevant to sustainable development. These programmes are aimed at international participants from, among others, VLIR-UOS partner- and scholarship countries. With ICP Connect project funding from the Belgian ministry for development cooperation (DGD), VLIR-UOS supports a number of selected Master Programmes.

VLIR-UOS awards scholarships to applicants from 30 eligible countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to attend one of 20 bachelor's or master's programmes taught in English. **Each year, 7-12 scholarships** are awarded to each of those programmes<sup>1</sup>. A general scholarship guideline that has been approved by DGD and is applicable to all Belgian actors that provide DGD-scholarships establishes the scholarship allowances and regulations. VLIR-UOS translates this general scholarship guideline into its own scholarship guidelines, which can be downloaded from the VLIR-UOS website. VLIR-UOS scholarships cover tuition fees, travel, insurance and living expenses (board and lodging). The current scholarship framework is available [here](#).

Please note that the VLIR-UOS scholarship guidelines and the scholarships amounts for the different scholarship types are subject to change at any time due to modifications to the general guideline. Scholarship costs may fluctuate in line with government funding decisions.

## Decentralised selection procedure

The selection of scholars is **decentralised** to the level of the programme organisers, but requires final approval of VLIR-UOS. DGD is then informed of the final selection.

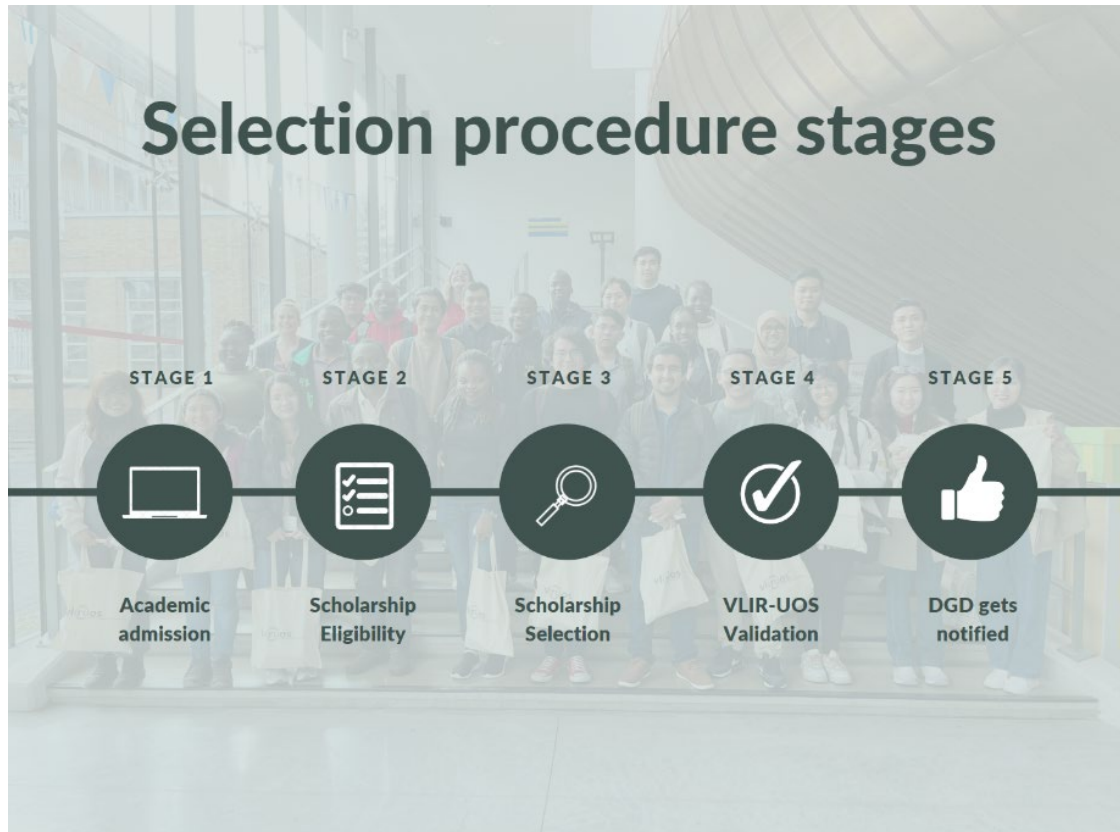
- **Candidate → Institution: direct submission.** The applicant submits the scholarship application directly to the higher education institution (HEI) / programme organizers. The institution uses its own (online) application system.
- **Institution → VLIR-UOS: written procedure.** The HEI / programme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

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<sup>1</sup> Annual intake of 12/10 new 1<sup>st</sup> year scholarships per study programme (phase 1/2) (for programmes of 60-90-120 ECTS); annual intake of 8/7 new 1<sup>st</sup> year scholarships per programme (phase 1/2) (for programmes of 180 ECTS).

# Scholar selection

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



## 1. Academic admission

The organising HEI is responsible for the academic selection of the scholarship participants of the bachelor or master programme. 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/or be put on the reserve/scholar-list if their application does not fulfil all academic criteria.** For example, if a candidate cannot provide a language certificate in line with the institution's regulations, they are not eligible for a scholarship and their details **cannot (conditionally) be added to the reserve/scholar-list**. In no case can they be invited to travel to Belgium as a scholarship recipient.

## 2. Scholarship eligibility

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

- **Nationality and country of residence:** Candidates must be nationals of one of the 30 eligible countries and must be a resident of one of these countries (not necessarily the same country) at the time of application:
  - 18 partner countries: Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Vietnam
  - 12 additional countries for scholarships: Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Palestine, Senegal and Zimbabwe.
- **Age:** Candidates for a bachelor programme cannot be younger than 19 on January 1 of the year of intake. Candidates cannot be older than 35 on January 1 of the year of intake for a bachelor or an initial master and 45 for an advanced master.
- **Professional background and experience:** Preference will be given to candidates employed in higher education, government or civil society, or those targeting a career in one of these sectors. Candidates employed in the private sector or newly graduated candidates with no work experience may also be considered if they provide a strong motivation and profile.
- **Scholarship applications:** Candidates may apply for only one ICP Connect scholarship application per year. Candidates cannot receive any other scholarship or grant to participate in this study programme or another programme simultaneously. (This criterion can only partly be checked by VLIR-UOS).
- **Previously awarded scholarships:** Candidates may not have previously received a scholarship from the Belgian government to attend a study programme and may not have enrolled in a study programme at a Belgian higher education institution before January 1 of the year of intake. (This criterion can only partly be checked by VLIR-UOS).

## 3. Scholarship selection

The course organisers select the scholarship awardees on the basis of an objective evaluation of the 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). All candidates that are not selected, can be divided in two categories: eligible students that comply with the selection criteria but are not selected (C-list) and ineligible students that do not comply with the selection criteria (D-list).

The organisers should attempt to meet a **relative gender balance** among scholarship participants (A-list) with a **40%- 60% gender ratio as overall guideline**. A reasonable cross-section of scholars from different countries and regions is targeted, taking into account the specificities of each ICP Connect Project. Within the ICP Connect framework, scholars are seen as potential 'agents of change' that we hope will contribute to societal change in their home country (or region) after completing their studies. Scholars are selected through an objective evaluation of their scholarship applications based on the following criteria:

- **Motivation:** The candidates' motivation and professional goals must reflect their competence in transferring knowledge/skills or setting up extension activities and highlighting themes relevant to sustainable development and pertinent to the study programme. Not only academic results are important, but so are - especially - the potential of the candidates and their commitment to become an 'agent of change' after completing their studies.
- **Professional experience:** Preference will be given to candidates who can demonstrate a greater chance of implementing and/or transferring newly gained knowledge/skills upon completion in a sustainable development context, such as in the higher education sector, government, civil society or the private sector, thereby contributing to positive societal change.
- **Gender balance:** A balance between male and female candidates who are awarded an ICP Connect scholarships, is targeted. VLIR-UOS strongly encourages female candidates to apply. Read more about our gender policy [here](#).
- **Regional balance:** A reasonable cross-section of scholars from different countries and regions is targeted, provided there are sufficient qualified candidates.
- **Leave No One Behind (LNOB):** In case of equally qualified candidates, preference will be given to candidates from more vulnerable groups.
- **Previously awarded scholarship:** Preference will be given to candidates who have never received a scholarship to study in a higher income country (bachelor or master).

**Additional selection information:**

- A candidate who holds two nationalities may only be chosen for the scholarship if they reside and/or work in one of the 30 countries on the list and apply only under one of those 30 nationalities. Applications under the other nationality are not accepted.
- Every pregnant VLIR-UOS scholar that benefits of a (long-term) study scholarship allowance can request suspension of the scholarship period due to pregnancy. When this scholar reports the pregnancy before starting the ICP educational programme, they can postpone the start of the educational programme or interrupt the programme with maximum one intake year due to pregnancy. Pregnant scholars cannot be refused at subscription. You can find more information in our [maternity and paternity/co-parent guidelines for VLIR-UOS scholars](#).
- 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. This list is to be submitted to VLIR-UOS on **April 15<sup>th</sup> at the latest**. The programme organisers upload the AB-list in the online tool. VLIR-UOS validates the list of participants within 10 working days after submission.

### AB/CD-list

1. Overview: Total number of eligible applications (total of A, B & C-candidates) and non-eligible (D-candidates)
2. For data information purposes we will request more details concerning the C & D-candidates in the future.
3. 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 (ranking). The number of reserve candidates should not exceed the number of effective candidates (minimum 5 – maximum 12, depending on the programme) (Excel).

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

### Refusal of candidates

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

- The candidate was already selected for another ICP Connect scholarship (during the same intake year) or has received another scholarship or grant to participate in this or another study programme simultaneously. or has previously received a scholarship from the Belgian government to attend a study programme, and/or has been enrolled in a study programme at a Belgian higher education institution before January 1 of the year of intake.
- 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.
- The candidate cancelled participation in an ICP programme previously 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 should 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). VLIR-UOS can make suggestions based on the selection criteria.

If one or more nominated candidates from the B-list should 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 organisers.

## **5. Inform DGD / validation by DGD**

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



# 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 confirmation, online access, further instructions visa application
  - B-list: email with selection result
- A-list candidates will be requested to provide more information and upload their passport in the online environment (if not done already by the programme). VLIR-UOS double-checks all info (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 (C & D-list)

## 2. Preparation of arrival of participants

### Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

- Once all selected candidates responded and all necessary information is available, VLIR-UOS has the final list of the A- and B-list candidates.
- 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 organisers** 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 subsequently 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. These are signed digitally by the scholars.

#### Responsibilities of the programme organisers and/or ICOS

- Book flights for the scholarship participants.
- Arranging/helping to arrange insurance for the scholars: The insurance must cover third party liability, health, personal injury, repatriation in case of illness/accident or early return in case of death or life-threatening illness of a first-degree family member.
- 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 organisers 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 the start of the programme, the best qualified candidate on the waiting list can be contacted
- In case this happens within a reasonable period after the start of the programme, a candidate on the waiting list can be contacted, taking into account
  - (i) They have 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 15<sup>th</sup> of October, no reserve candidate will be contacted unless a student of the B-list is already enrolled in the programme as a self-funding student.

#### Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

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

### Responsibilities of the organisers

- The course organisers 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 organise insurance for the new scholarship participant.

### **Non eligibility after cancellation**

In case a scholarship awardee cancels the scholarship due to foreseen circumstances (excluding medical reasons, personal situation, political circumstances, etc.) 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 15<sup>th</sup>). Since the selection is decentralised 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.

