



Vlaamse universiteiten en hogescholen raad

Priority Country Programme Academic year 2017-2018

1. General Description

The Priority Country Programme has been established with the aim of promoting exchanges of students between Belgium/Flanders and following priority countries: Brazil, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Russia, South Africa, Turkey and the United States of America, on a balanced and permanent basis. Under the Priority Country Programme both a pair (two persons) of students can be exchanged in the framework of a duo-project, as well as outgoing mobility from Flanders only.

Definition of 'student':

Undergraduate (bachelor) and graduate (master) student who is currently enrolled in a university or university college in Flanders or one of the partner countries.
Nationality of the student is not a criterion.

N.B.: All applicants should maintain their "student status" from the time of application until the end of their exchange period.

1.1 Eligibility

Due to the unique nature of this program, in order to be eligible, the exchange project needs to fulfill all five requirements below:

- 1) A higher education institution in Belgium/Flanders (home institution) and an educational institution in Brazil, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Russia, South Africa, Turkey or the United States of America (host institution) have established an academic cooperation agreement or have the intention to set up a new cooperation agreement.
- 2) The Flemish higher education institution, as well as the partner from Brazil, Chile,

Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Russia, South Africa, Turkey or the United States of America cannot ask tuition fees to the students for the exchanges.

- 3) The Flemish home institution has selected a Flemish student enrolled at the home institution to send to the host institution, and such selection has been accepted by the host institution. A Flemish student is defined as a student from any nationality, subscribed full-time in a Flemish Higher Education Institution.
- 4) In case of a duo-project, the same host institution has selected a student enrolled at the host institution to send to the Flemish home institution, and such selection has been accepted by the same Flemish home institution.
- 5) If the Flemish student has already started the exchange, or the international student has already stayed in Belgium/Flanders before the application period of the Priority Country Programme 2017-2018, the application is not accepted.

1.2. The duration and the amount of the scholarships

The Priority Country Programme 2017-2018 is preferably for exchange projects, which will start from August 2017 and end before September 2018 to avoid duplication of implementation period of exchange projects selected by the Transition Fellowship Programme 2016-2017. The selection for the Priority Country Programme is made only once a year. In this respect, those who are planning to exchange in the Spring Semester of 2018 (January-August 2018) shall apply for 2017-2018.

It is estimated that 80 to 120 students can benefit from the program on a yearly basis.

Many forms of mobility are accepted under the Priority Country Programme: both short mobility of one, two or three months, or long mobility of one semester up to a period of maximum one year, both for study or internship:

- *Brazil, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Russia, South Africa, or the United States of America: fellowships for students in both directions, both short and long mobility.*
- *Turkey: fellowships for students in both directions, short mobility only: duration of mobility is restricted to one month for internship and two months for study.*

The duration and the amount of the fellowships are standardized as follows:

- *The duration of the exchange can range from one month up to one year.*
- *For short exchanges, the fellowship amounts to €650,- per month for the Flemish and €800,- per month for the international student.*
- *An extra 200 euro/month can be awarded to Flemish students that belong to the*

underrepresented groups in higher education (Flemish study grant, students in a working programme, students with disabilities recognized by VAPH). They can additionally send a request for financial aid to the department of social services for students of their institution.

- The students receive a supplementary reimbursement for travel expenses, according to the following rules:

Distance to guest country	Amount in Euro
2000-2999 km (Morocco, Russia, Turkey)	320
>=8000 km (Brazil, Chile, Japan, Mexico, U.S.A., South Africa)	1100

- A month is defined as a period of 30 days, with the exception of the last month of mobility which needs to be minimum 28 days.
- A semester is defined as the period including the eventual introduction activities, the period of teaching and the period of preparing and doing the examinations. A period of 15 days before the start of a semester is also accepted in the period of funding.
- If a semester is longer than 4 months in the visiting institution, or the student wants to stay up to one year in the host institution, the fellowship will only be given for 4 months.

2. Application Procedure

2.1. Who applies?

The Flemish higher education institution applies.

In case of a duo-fellowship, the higher education institution in Belgium/Flanders applies on behalf of both institutions and students who are to participate in the exchange. International institutions shall cooperate fully with Flemish institutions in supplying precise information on applicants. Individuals wishing to take part in exchanges are advised to contact the relevant offices (e.g. International Relations Offices) of the higher education institution to file an application for this program.

2.2. Application period

Applications will be accepted up to midnight on 31st March 2017 local Belgian time. Applications sent or posted after 31st March 2017 will not be accepted.

2.3. Application material for submission

The application needs to be submitted through Mobility-Online Flanders:

<https://www.service4mobility.com/europe/LoginServlet>

Documents to be uploaded:

1. Motivation letter of the applicant (maximum two A4 pages).
2. Applicant Learning or Training agreement.
3. Official Transcript of records.
4. Letter of recommendation from a professor or lecturer of your home institution.
5. Copy of Cooperation Agreement (or Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation) between paired institutions, by e-mail with scanned files OR declaration of intention to set up new cooperation agreement, signed by Head of Flemish higher education institution, signed by both parties.
6. Copy of international passport of (paired) applicants by e-mail with scanned files.

All documents are to be written in English, with exception of the official Transcript of records. If the Transcript of Records written in another language than Dutch, French or English, enclose a certified translation.

International students meet all academic entrance criteria, including relevant language requirements, for entering the study programme in the Flemish host institution.

If courses listed on the application differ from the actual courses, Contact Persons or Persons of Exchange are responsible to inform the Secretariat for approval; if this procedure is not taken beforehand, fellowship award to (both) students is subject to cancellation and consequently refund.

2.4. How and when is the selection made

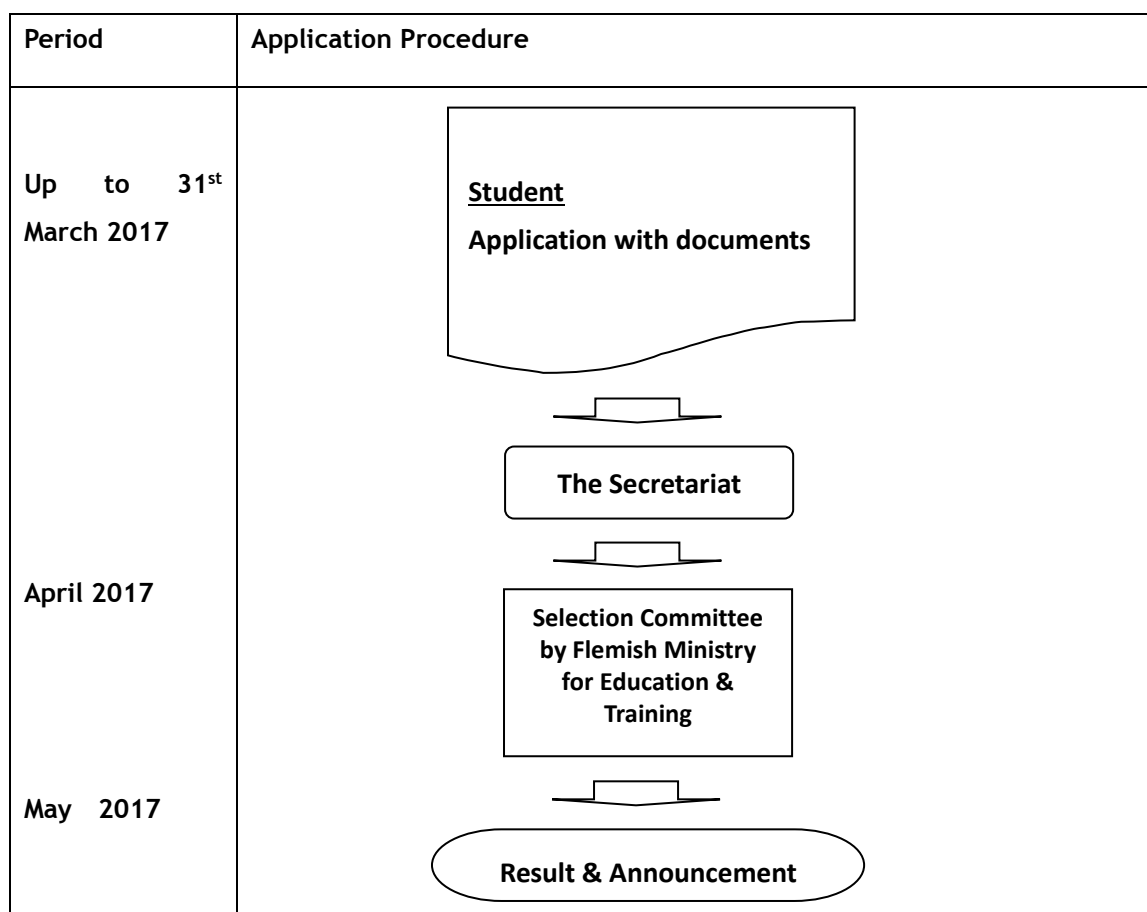
A Flemish Selection Committee will make the selection after the application deadline, based on the following criteria:

- the quality of the Learning or Training agreement;
- the quality of the applicant's motivation;
- the reasons for recommending the applicant in the Recommendation letter;
- the applicant's previous study results in the Transcript of records.

The Flemish Selection Committee bears in mind that the applicant will represent his/her country and higher education institution in the host country and in the host institution. DUO-applications do not necessarily get higher scores in the selection.

The decision of the Flemish Selection Committee will be announced by May 2017.

The Secretariat will directly notify Contact Persons per e-mail.



2.5. Selection criteria

Applications for the exchange of students will be accepted from all Belgian/Flemish higher education institutions, and in all disciplines. A maximum of six applications can be submitted per higher education institution per country.

Very important: at least 25% of all scholarships will be awarded to students with a low socio-economic background (only applicable for the Flemish students):

- Students who are entitled to a Flemish study grant, confirmed by AHOVOKS.
- Students with a disability, recognized by VAPH.
- Working students in a work programme. The student must be an employee, or must be looking for a job, and the study programme must be aligned with the work programme proposed by the employment service. Moreover, the student cannot have obtained a Master degree or a second cycle diploma yet.

The date of reference to determine whether a student comes from a low socio-economic background is the deadline of 31st March 2017. The data in the data warehouse of the Ministry of Education and Training will be considered as the correct data.

If the proposal includes a student entitled to a Flemish study grant, a student with a disability, or a working student, it is important to indicate this in the application. If the applications of these categories of Flemish students do not cover at least 25% of all scholarships, then the budget will not be transferred to other groups of students.

2.6. Scholarships

The scholarship for the selected exchange projects will be paid directly by the Secretariat to the bank accounts of students who participate in those exchange projects. There are no restrictions in using the fellowship.

2.7. Reporting

Upon completion of the mobility or exchange, all students - both outgoing and incoming - are expected to submit an essay for which a format is provided and to fill in a short questionnaire about their mobility.

3. Instructions for Application

3.1. Language of application

The application is written in English.

3.2. Details of the Application

1. Home Institution

- *APPLICANT* shall be any student enrolled in a university or university college in Flanders who will participate in the exchange.
- *CONTACT PERSON* means a regular staff of the Flemish institution who coordinates the exchange programme and is willing to communicate with the Secretariat in such events as verifying application details, monitoring exchanges and providing further information on the status of the exchange.

N.B.: For each pair of an exchange project, the exchange period of the Flemish and the international student does not necessarily need to coincide, and the form of exchange does not need to be the same.

2. Host Institution

Provide information of the host institution involved in the exchange project. The host institution shall be resided in Brazil, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Russia, South Africa, Turkey or the United States of America.

- *CONTACT PERSON* means a regular staff of the host institution who coordinates the exchange programme and is willing to communicate with the Secretariat in such events as verifying application details, monitoring exchange and providing further information on the status of the exchange.
- *PERSON OF EXCHANGE* shall be any host student who will participate in the exchange (in case of duo-fellowship).
- Confirmation on Agreement with Host Institution (*to be signed by the contact person at the Flemish Home Institution*): since the contact person in the Flemish institution is required to complete the application on behalf of two people who will participate in the exchange between the home and the host institution, he/she should confirm by checking "YES" that the contact person in the host institution also agrees with this submission of the application.

3. Description of the Mobility or Exchange Program

In this section, please describe the level, duration and purpose of the mobility or exchange as instructed on the form.

- Level of mobility/exchange: please check appropriate boxes to specify whether the students for exchange are in an undergraduate or in a graduate study.
- Duration of Exchange: As stipulated in the General Description of Priority Country Programme, the duration of the mobility can range from one month to one year.
- Purpose of Exchange: Please specify what the purpose of the exchange is. Also fill out how many credits (ECTS) will be recognized by home or host institution. 60 ECTS or equivalent is recommended in case of 1 year and 30 ECTS or equivalent is recommended in case of 1 semester.
- Exchange Details: Flemish (and host) students' learning or training agreement during their exchange periods should be added. Details shall be elaborate as they will determine the selection of the application.

For your information, if courses listed on the application differ from the actual courses, Contact Persons or Persons of Exchange are responsible to inform the Secretariat for approval; if this procedure is not taken beforehand, fellowship award to both students is subject to cancellation and is consequently refunded. Intensive language courses by students are not honored in this program.

4. Source of Finance / Certification of Authenticity

If this exchange project has any other source of finance, please specify.