2018

**Sick students retain scholarship**

To receive a study allowance, a student must take at least 27 ECTS credits (out of 60). Even if a student who does not take 27 study points due to illness will not receive a study allowance and whoever reduces his or her study credits or will have to pay back part of the study allowance. This minimum requirement of 27 credits will be abolished for sick students from the next academic year.

**Compulsory non-binding admission test veterinary medicine**

From the academic year 2019-2020, students who wish to follow the veterinary training course must take part in a mandatory non-binding admission test. Currently there are mandatory non-binding admission tests for students who want to start a teacher training program and students who want to start a civil engineering or civil engineering architect at the university.

With the admission test, the minister wants to make the intake in the program more qualitative and wants to increase the chances of success. The test will consist of questions mathematics, physics, chemistry and a non-cognitive questionnaire, based on elements from the already developed calibration tests and also the SiMON-test of Ghent University.

**New quality assurance system higher education**

On 15 December 2017 the Flemish Government attached its approval on principle to the draft decree laying down the quality assurance system in higher education. After advice by the Flemish Education Council (VLOR) and the Flanders Social and Economic Council (SERV) the draft decree was subject of a second approval on principle on 9 February 2018, after which it was handed over to the Council of State for advice. On 6 April 2018 a final approval by the Flemish Government followed, after which the draft degree was submitted to the Flemish Parliament. The draft decree anchors the integrated system of external quality assurance at institution level definitively in the Codex Higher Education for university colleges and research universities.

Since the nineties every programme at a university college or research university in Flanders is subjected to an assessment by an external evaluation organ. This mode of operation guaranteed that all programmes met the same minimal standards with regard to quality. After three decennia a new system was elaborated in close cooperation with the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders, the research universities, university colleges and students. Basis of the new system is the institution review, which grants more autonomy and trust to the institutions, who become themselves responsible for the quality of their offer.
The new Quality Assurance System 2019-2025 stipulates that from 2020 onwards all university colleges and research universities in Flanders will be subject of an institution review every six years. This review will assess on the one hand the implementation and adjustment of the educational policy. On the other hand the institution must demonstrate that they are themselves capable to guarantee the quality of their programmes. In case of a positive evaluation all various programmes will no longer be periodically be re-evaluated by an external evaluation organ. In case of a negative institution review the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders will again assess the quality of individual programmes via external commissions.

Het new quality assurance system will be applied to existing programmes. New programmes are still obliged to submit to a first recognition and must receive a positive assessment at the programme level, before an institution may guard itself the quality of these new programmes.

All university colleges and research universities in Flanders took part in 2016-2017 in a ‘pilot institution review’. For the first time the efficiency of the educational policy of the research universities and university colleges was assess globally and no longer by programme individually. The evaluation showed that all parties involved were favourable to this new mode of operation.

**Strengthening teacher education programmes**

On 22 December 2017 the Flemish Government attached its second approval on principle to the draft decree on the elaboration of the associate degree programmes within the university colleges and the strengthening of the teacher education programmes within university colleges and research universities. The decree also comprises a number of measures on the transfer of the teacher education programmes from adult education to higher education (see [2017 – Reform of teacher training programme](#)). A final approval by the Flemish Government followed on 2 March 2018, after which the draft degree was submitted with the Flemish Government.

**Higher vocational education**

On 22 December 2017 the Flemish Government attached its second approval on principle to the draft decree on the elaboration of the associate degree programmes within the university colleges and the strengthening of the teacher education programmes within university colleges and research universities (see [2017 – Higher vocational education](#)). A final approval by the Flemish Government followed on 2 March 2018, after which the draft degree was submitted with the Flemish Government.

**Training for teacher trainers**

In February 2018, on the initiative of the Flemish Minister of Education, a new and unique training for teacher trainers started in Flanders. Goal of the programme is supporting and professionalising instructors who are teaching in a teacher training programme.

The project is a result of a close collaboration of various institutions. All Flemish institutions offering the teacher training programme cooperate in the organisation of the training. The universities, university colleges, representatives of the Adult Education Centres, the professional association VELOV and the Flemish Department of Education have a seat in the supporting steering committee.

The teacher trainers is offered the opportunity to take part in a training programme which lasts one or two years. The training departs from the own practical experience of the teacher trainers and contains five training components:

1. Professionalisation of the teacher trainer
2. Development of the curriculum
3. Practical research
4. Coaching and guidance of experience-based learning
5. Learning together, teaching together

The programme pays attention to both practice as well as theory. After successfully finishing the permanent training the participant is granted the Certificate Training of Teacher Trainers.

Orientation and guidance

Since the spring of 2017 all pupils in the final year of secondary education who took part in Columbus receive general feedback and tips to engage in a more conscious choice of study. Columbus is the digital, non-binding orientation test which guides pupils in their choice of study towards higher education. In the autumn of 2017 the feedback module was expanded which allows participants to receive a more refined and tailor-made form of feedback. Each participant receives information on where (s)he finds him-/herself in comparison to other pupils in Flanders, where a.o. the position towards pupils within the same type of secondary education (gse, vse, ...) is communicated. New is also the fact that Columbus is now open for pupils in their pre-final year of secondary education.

At the beginning of 2018 the Flemish Ministry of Education launched the website education in numbers [1]. The site was developed in consultation with the university colleges, universities, the Flemish Association of Students, the Flemish Pupil Council and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders. Departing from a database the website provides in a uniform way information on all programmes and institutions of higher education in Flanders. For the first time this valuable information is shared with (future) students on one digital platform. The goal of the website is to further support students in their study choice process and to offer more information on the programme and institution of their choice.

In the framework of good diagnostics at the start of higher education Flanders is developing compulsory, non-binding tests per programme or cluster of programmes. Since school year 2017-2018 generic, institution-neutral orientation tests are obligatory for students starting an integrated teacher training programme. These tests were introduced with the aim of strengthening the profile of the students entering these programmes. On 23 February 2018 the Flemish Government decided that from academic year 2018-2019 onwards non-binding orientation tests will also become obligatory for the bachelor programmes of civic engineer and civic engineer-architect, organised by a research university.

The non-binding orientation tests aim at strengthening the choice of study, not at limiting the intake of new students. In Flanders a binding entrance exam exists only for the programmes of doctor and dentist and programmes in the arts. Participation in an orientation test is/will become an enrolment condition for the integrated teacher training programmes and the programmes of civic engineer(-architect), but the result is not binding. A student who does not pass the test is still granted access to the programme. An institution may however decide to impose remedial actions.

2017

Reform of the teacher training programme

In consultation with various stakeholders the Flemish Minister of Education is elaborating a reform of the teacher training programme in Flanders. The framework for this reform was established in a concept note adopted by the Flemish Government in March 2016. A draft decree, based on an
elaboration of the framework in seven working groups, was adopted a first time on principle by the Flemish Government on 14 July 2017. On 22 September 2017 the Flemish Government adopted draft amendments introducing a number of additions to the draft decree. The legislative process allowing for the adoption and implementation of the new decree will be further elaborated with a view to introduce the renewed teacher training programmes in Flanders in academic year 2019-2020.

The reform of the teacher training programme aims at raising the profile of new entrants to teacher education programmes and at streamlining the programmes and enhancing the quality of the teacher training. Some measures are already implemented, such as the introduction of a (non-binding) entrance test for students at the beginning of initial teacher training offered by university colleges.

From 2019-2020 onwards teacher training programmes will be offered solemnly by research universities and university colleges. Currently a university student needs to obtain a master degree in its own subject before (s)he can choose to become a teacher by completing an additional one year teacher programme at master level. In the future bachelor graduates in the various subjects will be able to transfer directly to a teacher programme at master level, without holding a master in their own subject material.

The bachelor programmes for teachers in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, organized at university colleges, will remain. Since 2017 these programmes are only accessible for students taking a compulsory, non-binding orientation test. The latter has been introduced to allow for a good diagnostics at the start of higher education. The test was organised for all students who enrolled for academic year 2016-2017. The orientation test was made available via a digital platform for students who wanted to enrol in the teacher training programme in academic year 2017-2018. After completing the various modules of the test these students received feedback as well as a prove of participation.

In addition to completing a master or bachelor programme in education becoming a teachers will also be possible for experts with a relevant professional experience of at least 3 years. They will be able to obtain the qualification of teacher after successfully completing an associate programme in education (higher vocational education), organised by a university college.

With regard to the content of the teacher training programmes an enhanced focus will be put on themes such as didactics, class management, teaching in an urban context, language skills, multilingualism and diversity. The teacher training institutions will not only focus on future teachers, but will also support the professionalization of acting teachers, e.g. by offering activities of continuous professional development.

**Higher vocational education**

On 25 March 2016 the Flemish Government approved the concept note ‘Developing higher education’. From academic year 2019-2020 higher vocational education will become a fully-fledged component of higher education. Course participants will become students, entitled to study grants and students services.

The principles of the concept note are being converted into regulation. A first Emergency Ordinance on adult education and higher vocational education was approved by the Flemish Government in December 2016.

On 28th of April 2017 the Flemish Government approved a new framework for quality assurance. In order to be incorporated into higher education all recognised HBO5-programmes will have to be transformed and be based on one or more professional qualifications. The HBO5-programmes will
become subject of a ‘Test New Programme’. Parallel to the bachelor and master programmes they will be evaluated by the Dutch Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). The framework which was approved in spring 2017 pays attention to the educational content, the educational process, material facilities, the quality of staff and internal quality assurance.

On 14 July 2017 the Flemish Government attached its first approval on principle to a draft decree which defines the structural development of HBO5-programmes within the university colleges. The decree also contains a set of rules for the transfer of the teacher training from adult education to higher education. The legislative process allowing for the implementation of the new decree is still to be finalised to allow for an implementation of the renewed HBO5-system on 1 September 2019.

2016

New statute for student entrepreneurs

On 18 November 2016 the Federal Government approved two implementing orders for the statute of ‘student-entrepreneur’. The law is currently discussed in parliament, but the approval of the two implementing orders allow the statute to already become operational as of the first of January 2017. From then on students can:

- benefit from a more favourable system of taxation and social contributions;
- build rights in sickness and disability benefit;
- remain dependent on their parents.

To benefit from these advantages a student should be between 18 and 25 and follow a training course in which he can obtain a recognized qualification. The new statute will make entrepreneurship more attractive for students.

Supervision in higher education

Quality assurance in higher education in Flanders relies on several actors and mechanisms. One of the actors involved are the government commissioners, who check whether university colleges and research universities do not take decisions which contradict the law or which endanger the financial stability of the institution. Since these tasks are also carried out by other actors, the Flemish Government prepares changes in the supervision of higher education.

In this context the Flemish government approved on 30 September 2016 the concept note ‘A slimmer model of supervision for Flemish Higher Education’. As a token of confidence in the university colleges and research universities, and in order to reduce their administrative burden, the concept note suggests adjustments which will grant more freedom to the institutions of higher education:

- From 2019 on there will be fewer government commissioners, who supervise the colleges and universities.
- The commissioners will cooperate more intensively, which will further reduce their financial burden on the government.
- In addition, the tasks of the government commissioners will be further reduced by identifying the tasks already undertaken by other actors.

Other initiatives that will be necessary for the implementation of the new regulatory model will be bundled into a transition plan. This plan will be further elaborated and made concrete by the Flemish Minister of Education.
Orientation and guidance

In the spring of 2016 the Flemish Minister of Education and Training Hilde Crevits launched Columbus. Columbus is the compulsory, non-binding exploration test for pupils in the third stage of secondary education who wish to continue studying. The instrument fits within a broader pathway to qualitatively guide pupils in their choice of study to higher education. In the future the focus of the instrument will be broadened to include the transition to the labour market.

Columbus comprises various important elements of a choice of studies: study skills, motivation, interests, mathematics, languages and reasoning. In the spring of 2016 a number of schools already took part in the test that will step by step be introduced in secondary education. Amongst others on the basis of the results of the pupils in the first year of higher education the instrument will be gradually validated and developed further.

Columbus is developed by a group of experts within the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges (VLUHR). This takes place in consultation with the SOHO platform of the Flemish Education Council (VLOR). This platform, which provides a bridge between secondary and higher education, elaborated a first version of a scenario which supports schools to imbed Columbus in their own school career guidance.

In the framework of good diagnostics at the start of higher education Flanders is also developing compulsory, non-binding tests per programme or cluster of programmes. An institution-neutral calibration test for the engineering programmes has been organized on 29 June and 12 September 2016. A generic, institution-neutral orientation tests for the integrated teacher trainings will be organized for the first time between 12 September and 15 October 2016 for those students who start in academic year 2016-2017. From academic year 2017-2018 onwards the tests will be taken prior to the enrolment of the students. The tests for the programmes of engineering and the integrated teacher trainings are respectively developed by the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR) and the Flemish Council of University Colleges (VLHORA). At a later stage orientation tests can also be developed for other programmes in higher education.

Higher vocational education

On 25 March 2016 the Flemish Government approved the concept note ‘Developing higher education’. The goal of the note is to developed Higher vocational education (HBO 5) into a fully-fledged component of higher education.

Higher vocational education, which is currently organized by university colleges, centres for adult education and secondary schools (for HBO5 in nursing), will in the future only be offered by university colleges. As a departure from the rule the HBO5 programme in nursing will continue to be organised by secondary schools. The concept note foresees a fully-fledged student statute for young people in higher vocational education, which will allow them to get access to study allowances, student facilities, etc. The programme offer of higher vocational education will in the future match better with higher education, but at the same time the unique character of the current offer (work-based learning, intricate structure, flexibility) will be maintained.

A more strongly developed HBO5 must attract students who nowadays do not find their way to higher education yet, and contribute to a further democratisation of higher education. The Flemish minister of Education and Training will now further develop the principles of the concept note.
**Enhance teacher training**

On the basis of the results of various recent reviews the Flemish Minister of Education wants, in consultation with all stakeholders involved (teachers, students, schools, providers of teacher training programmes, support, ...) stimulate the institutions offering programmes of teacher training to continue developing their strengths. Potential students must again with conviction choose to become a teacher.

On 29 February 2016 the minister of Education, together with the King Badouin Foundation, launched the project ‘small children, big opportunities’. This professionalization pathway for the bachelor programmes for pre-primary education focuses on dealing better with diversity and poverty amongst children.

In March 2016 the concept note ‘Enhancing teacher trainings: recruiting and qualitative teacher trainings as a cornerstone for qualitative education’ was approved. This note establishes the framework for the reform of the teacher trainings where a better cooperation between the various providers is an important point of attention. This framework is being further elaborated in seven working groups with representatives of various teacher training institutions, the field of work and the trade unions. On the basis of the results of the working groups a parliamentary act will be prepared.

In order to guarantee a good diagnostics at the start of higher education a compulsory, non-binding orientation test for the integrated teacher training programmes has been developed by the Flemish Council of University Colleges (VLHORA). This test will be organized for the first time between 12 September and 15 October 2016 for students who start in academic year 2016-2017. From academic year 2017-2018 onwards the tests will be taken prior to the enrolment of the students.

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