



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL

joint degree with



GHENT
UNIVERSITY

SO CIAL SCIE NCES

www.vub.ac.be/social-sciences

180
ECTS

2019-2020



Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Publisher

Caroline Pauwels, rector
Pleinlaan 2 - 1050 Brussels

The information in this brochure may be subject to change. Always check www.vub.be for the most up-to-date information. This publication is not legally binding.

Realisation

Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Marketing, Communication and Events
Pleinlaan 2 - 1050 Brussels
studentenrekrutering@vub.be

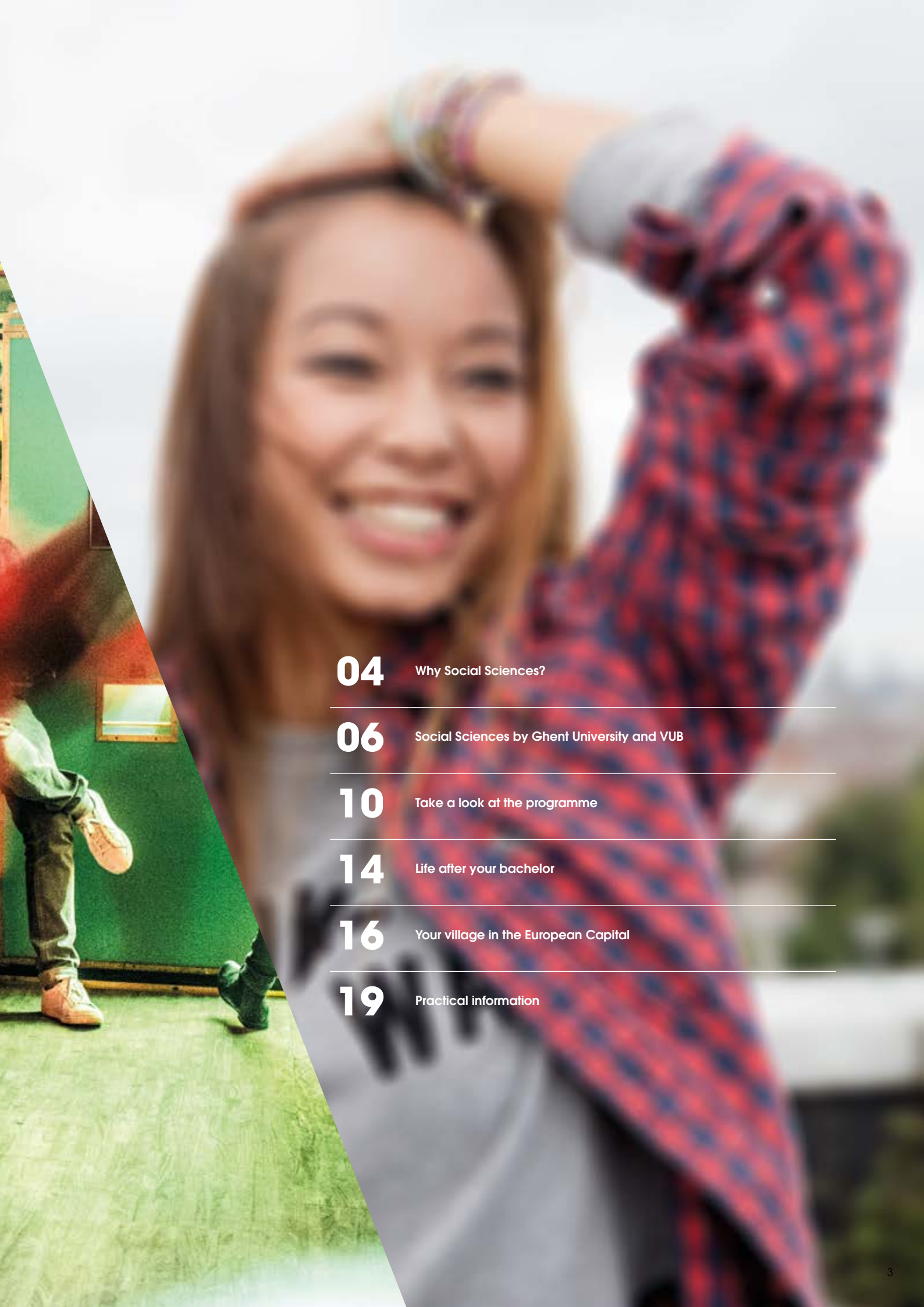
Concept

www.shortcut.be

Lay-out

Gekko





04 Why Social Sciences?

06 Social Sciences by Ghent University and VUB

10 Take a look at the programme

14 Life after your bachelor

16 Your village in the European Capital

19 Practical information

WHY SOCIAL SCIENCES?

ALL GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES

Two top universities sharing their knowledge to design a selected programme based on three social sciences: political science, sociology, communication studies. One winner: you.

"With the BSc. Social Sciences we aim to turn 'internationalization' from an academic slogan into a classroom tool. When students of more than 40 different nationalities come together to learn about 'globalization', 'international relations' and 'cultural difference', these concepts are not abstractions, but come to live and provide plenty of material for debate. In crafting this programme we not only draw on the combined experience of two universities and six academic departments, but we also want to bring our students' experiences to the table in order to create a uniquely diverse learning environment. Add to this a deliberately interdisciplinary curriculum that encourages problem-based thinking, classroom discussion and a firm grasp of research methods and the BSc. Social Sciences offers you a unique launch to an academic career."

Prof. dr. Dieter Vandebroek (VUB)
Programme Director BSc. Social Sciences

"It takes knowledge to produce knowledge. Never has this been truer than in today's rapidly changing world. As governments, international organizations, businesses and citizens work to make sense of the complex and globally interconnected circumstances of contemporary life, the knowledge and skills of social scientists are more relevant—and more in demand—than ever before. The VUB and Ghent University have joined forces to create a problem-driven curriculum that emphasizes active and critical engagement with the issues that are shaping today's world. As teachers, our goal is not simply to prepare students for the next exam, but to help them to become active producers of knowledge, and meaningful participants in the changes unfolding around us all. Brussels—with its rich, multicultural and organizational life—provides the perfect setting for such an endeavor."

Prof. dr. Christopher Parker (Ghent University)
Co-director BSc. Social Sciences



Think outside the box

Complex societies require complex thinking. In a world of rapid changes and shifting boundaries there is a growing need for minds that are capable of switching perspective and thinking outside of narrow academic boxes.

That is why the VUB and Ghent University have joined forces to create an innovative model of interdisciplinary and interuniversity education: the Bachelor in Social Sciences (BScSS).

Located in the heart of Europe and boasting a student body of seventy different nationalities, the BScSS provides a uniquely diverse learning environment that helps students to tackle the global problems of the future.

MADE IN BELGIUM DEVELOPED FOR EUROPE

This ambitious joint programme by top universities Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel tears down the walls between political science, sociology and communication studies – enabling you to build solid bridges between them. The best of three worlds, one in which you're about to excel thanks to your analytical approach, methodological strength and of course, your authority on European institutions and social issues.

According to a persistent urban legend, Albert Einstein once spent an entire summer exploring the world of social sciences. He devoured as much literature as he could get his hands on, determined to come up with an idea as revolutionary as his relativity theory had been for the natural sciences. But come autumn, he hadn't made any progress. Einstein returned all of his books to the university library, declaring that the social sciences were "way too difficult".

The power to intersect

The good news is that you don't have to be Einstein to study social sciences. But the story tells us something about the complexity inherent to the house of social sciences, partially stemming from the ongoing competition between paradigms in many of its rooms. If social reality lacks an absolute truth, so does the ever-widening branch of disciplines studying it. There is almost never one explanation that fits the mould.

The Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences (BScSS) doesn't just help you to manage this interdisciplinary environment – a skill to cherish for life – it actually sees it as an essential asset of the social sciences. Combining the strengths of political science, sociology and communication studies, it gives you the perpetual advantage of looking at things from multiple angles. Especially since you adopt an analytical approach to the three disciplines, diving into theories and concepts

on selected themes with real-life relevance, rather than memorising the chronological development of schools and currents.


The BScSS achieves this ambitious aim for its students by mixing up core courses with interdisciplinary ones. As you get better at adopting the analytical and interdisciplinary position towards social issues, you make better and more targeted use of all the knowledge gained during the programme. That's the point where you transcend the theoretical level and apply what you know to social reality. A practical asset at your side for many years to come – and one that's in high demand from many public and private organisations.

New skills for a career on the Old Continent

The BScSS programme designers at Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel had your career on their minds when they put together the curriculum.

They enriched it with two very important dimensions: a methodological one, making sure you master quantitative as well as qualitative research methods; and a topical one – the European Union and its institutions.

Being capable of seeing the difference between noise and signal is more crucial than ever. The



The programme is designed as a launchpad for the citizens who will shape tomorrow's Europe.

digital revolution produces a rapidly growing amount of rough data. These data sets only reveal information to those with the right methods for interpretation at hand. The BScSS programme sets aside a great deal of time to make sure you are ahead of this data-driven future. It's a priceless tool to have in your methodological research kit, whichever professional field you may choose.

Speaking of which: the programme is designed as a launchpad for the aspirational citizens who will shape tomorrow's Europe. Throughout the curriculum, several courses are imbued with a European dimension. Located in Brussels, surrounded by European and international political, social and media organisations, this focus on the EU as the natural context in which the programme comes to life is intended to strengthen the link between your current studies and your future options.

A great place to become cosmopolitan

Brussels may be the booming capital of Europe; but it remains a city tailored to the human heart. With close to 1.2 million inhabitants, it has all the infrastructure, diversity and energy of a world-class city, while maintaining the suburb character of the 19 villages that make it up. This gives the inhabitants and visitors of Brussels both a cosmopolitan and a homey feeling.

The programme provides access to English-taught masters in both of the organising universities.

"This bachelor not only gets to boast about being an international programme, it also lives up to (and goes beyond) an international standard"

Adrienne Arnot-Bardshaw, Australia

The campus of Vrije Universiteit Brussel, where the BScSS programme is taught, reflects this duality. On the one hand, it is a perfect starting point to discover the city, well connected to the subway, railway and bus network. On the other hand, it is like a village in that same city, offering plenty of opportunities to live, play sport, eat, drink, meet up and study.

Taking up the Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences, the new joint project of Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel is an enriching educational and developmental experience, and one that paves the way for many more of these experiences to come. As an internationally accredited programme, it provides access to English-taught master programmes in both of the organising universities as well as abroad.

"It is a luxury for a "Bruxelloise" to have the entire world in my class room without leaving my city"

Zinaïda Sluijs, Belgium

KEY THREADS OF THE PROGRAMME

Drawing on the combined insights of three disciplines – sociology, political science and communication studies – the BScSS offers a three-year, English-language programme that provides students with the academic tools that help them analyse and better understand the societies they live in. Throughout these three years you will become intimately familiar with the three scientific disciplines that build the core of our programme.

Political science

Is China on its way to becoming the next global superpower? Did the USA become more polarised under Donald Trump? What explains the rise of populism? Should migrants have the right to vote in their host countries? What does democracy really mean? Political scientists love to sink their teeth into these types of questions, and analyse how societies govern themselves and make decisions. The political pillar of our programme provides you with the theories, concepts and techniques to better understand the ways in which power operates from the level of everyday citizen interactions to political struggles situated at the international level.

Sociology

Why do certain kids do better at school than others? Which factors determine the type of job or income a person will get? Where do differences in musical taste come from? Why is our society so obsessed with beauty and slimness? Why do certain people live longer and healthier lives than others? These are just some of the questions posed and answered by sociologists. From the structure of large-scale social systems – like states or labor markets – to the fine details of everyday interaction, sociologists aim to uncover the basic principles that shape social life. The sociological pillar of our programme provides you with the concepts and techniques that help you study and understand these principles.

Communication studies

Which role did the tabloid press play in “Brexit”? How is the refugee crisis portrayed in the media? What is the business model of Netflix? Why do some of us share private information and intimate feelings on social media? Communication scientists are fascinated by these types of questions and wish to know more about the impact of media and communication on our everyday lives and on society as a whole. The communication angle of the programme provides you with the concepts and techniques that help you to critically reflect upon the every-increasing role of (digital) media in our society.

Methodological core

At the BScSS we aim to train students who are not only capable of discussing complex problems, but who can also effectively study those problems. That is why a considerable part of the curriculum is devoted to acquiring some of the key methods deployed by the social sciences from statistical analysis to interviewing and from participant observation to content analysis. Through a combination of theoretical lectures and hands-on exercises you will learn to formulate key research problems and pick the techniques that are best suited to solving them.



OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

Of course you're wondering which courses you'll need to take. A broad array of topics will be covered during the first two years, giving you a firm base to build upon. In your third bachelor year you'll get the chance to specialise in the social science to your liking.

BACHELOR YEAR 1	ECTS
Introduction to sociology	6
Introduction to political science	6
Introduction to communication studies	6
European history	6
Political structures and processes of the EU	6
Introduction to Belgian society and politics	6
Statistics for the social sciences	6
Introduction to social, political and communication science methodology	6
Seminar current issues 1	6
Communicating scientific knowledge	6

BACHELOR YEAR 2	ECTS
Critical thinking in sociology	6
Critical thinking in political science	6
Critical thinking in communication studies	6
History of international relations	6
Social change and inequality in Europe	6
Economy and society	6
European media, culture and diversity	6
Quantitative research methods seminar	6
Qualitative research methods seminar	6
Seminar current issues 2	6

Check www.vub.ac.be/en for up-to-date information on the curriculum and the courses.

You'll find more info on page 12 and 13.

ECTS: 'European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System'.
One ECTS-credit represents 25 to 30 hours of study.

BACHELOR YEAR 3	ECTS
Choose one Elective Advanced Research Methods:	6
Multivariate data analysis	
Generalized linear techniques	
Political ethnography	
Content and textual analysis	
Digital methods	
Policy analysis	
Orientation Sociology	42
Key perspectives in social theory	
Health sociology	
Social demography	
Cross-national perspectives on work and employment	
Sociology of organisation	
Cultural sociology	
Generalized linear techniques	
Orientation Political Science	42
International relations theory	
History of globalisation	
Contemporary politics in the global south	
European policy-making	
Ethics in international relations	
Contemporary issues in international politics	
Political ethnography	
Orientation Communication Studies	42
Historical perspectives on media and communication	
Media psychology and sociology	
Online and social media strategies	
International communication	
European media policy	
Cultural studies	
Content and textual analysis	
Bachelorpaper	12

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Introduction to sociology

The main objective of this course is to shed light on the specific nature of the sociological approach in the study of society. You will use two angles as starting points: the study of social structures and the study of culture. These angles will be applied to layers of social complexity from the micro up to the macro level. In addition to these basic elements of sociological analysis, three fundamental processes supporting the construction of social reality are explained: institutionalisation, socialisation and stratification. You will apply the whole of these insights to a number of subfields in sociology, such as the study of deviance and social change. Later in the course we explain the different sociological paradigms and go into the question of how these different approaches complement each other within the whole of the scientific study of social reality.

Introduction to political science

The introduction to political sciences is a course that aims to explain what politics as a notion enhances and what the study of politics entails. You will get an overview of the most recurring definitions of politics and the different approaches prevalent in the field of research will be sketched. You will get to know notions of power and power exercise and we will demonstrate that social conflicts stimulate political debates and require political solutions. You will also be shown how different perceptions of social conflict lead to the definition of diverging solutions for social problems by political actors. Later on, the most important actors intervening in the political process will receive attention, as will political institutions like the parliament and government. Special attention will be devoted to the European Union.

Introduction to communication studies

In this course, the process of communication and theories related to the different aspects of the communication process are central. The course aims to provide you with a broad overview of the communication studies discipline, on the basis of which different domains in communication studies are explored in depth in subsequent courses.

In this course the origins and development of media studies as a social science will be treated. It presents and discusses the main research traditions in communication studies and looks at the relationship with social, cultural and technological processes.

Political processes & structures of the EU

In this course you are introduced in a systematic manner to five dimensions of European integration. First and foremost you'll learn the historical development of European integration from the European Coal and Steel Community to the Treaty of Lisbon. We will talk about EU's political system and decision-making as well as the rule of law within the EU. The political economy of the EU will get attention and last but not least we'll talk about the EU in relationship to the rest of the world. These insights from history, economics and law are indispensable to gaining a good understanding of the political evolution of the European construction.

European history

This course offers an introduction to the political, economic, social and cultural history of Europe covering the period ranging from the French Revolution to the end of the Second World War. Sergio Romano's Outline of European History from 1789 to 1989 will be taken as our point of departure in the treatment of facts and events. A description of key moments in European history will be coupled with an analytical component that accounts for the fundamental transformations the political, social, economic and cultural landscapes underwent over time. Urbanisation, industrialisation, technologisation, democratisation and the emergence of the nation-states are the processes that have marked European history most distinctively in the past two centuries. The variable degree to which the different nation-states on the European territory were affected by these processes will receive special attention in this course as they account to an important extent for the substantial diversity still seen today.

Introduction to social, political and communication science methodology

In this course you will be given a short overview of the current state of affairs in social science research. Faced with the need to solve complex social issues and confronted with the enlargement of the scope and extent of social enquiry asked for by policy-makers and stakeholders, the deficiency of traditional models and research techniques has been defined as the most pressing issue to be tackled in the near future. As a result, scholars and practitioners have advanced the necessity of combined research techniques and an interdisciplinary methodological framework as

a means to overcome current research problems. The introductory overview will be followed by an extensive synthesis of the different research methods and subject treatment. Through abundant references to specific research situations and case studies, you will be acquainted with the vast array of methods and techniques that prevails in the field and gain a basic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses each of these methodological paradigms has to offer.

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

Picture this: you ace your final exam. You receive your bachelor diploma. You're as proud as can be — and you should be. But what's next? You'd be surprised just how many opportunities are out there, waiting for you.

The end? Or the beginning?

There is no doubt that your Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences (BScSS) will stand out on the labour market. However, the biggest added value of the programme lies in paving the way for ambitious follow-up trajectories, such as master programmes and internships.

Your third bachelor year is designed to help you prepare for this choice. You major in one of the three social sciences that the programme is built on. It allows you to build expertise in this domain, but without losing track of the other two sciences. That way all choices for master programmes remain open, but you'll have more insight about what you really want to master in.

At the same time, this last bachelor year offers you multiple contacts with professionals from organisations gravitating around the EU institutions through guest lectures and site visits. It's a great way to start building your network, with an eye on the future.

Master of the Universe?

Well, the Universe is big. But still, Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel are two acclaimed universities. Both are well placed on international rankings. The joint project they offer with the BScSS is an internationally accredited bachelor programme. This means your diploma grants you immediate access to many master programmes taught abroad. That's just one of many possible next stops for you: the UNICA-network, the association of universities in European capitals.

Another smart move to consider is pursuing an academic career in one of the available English-taught master programmes at Ghent University or Vrije Universiteit Brussel. You can join, either directly or via a short preparatory programme, a number of English-language Master-programmes in political science, sociology or communication studies at both the VUB and Ghent University.

Moreover, some Dutch-taught master programmes are also available to you after completion of the BScSS — given of course that you meet the language requirements.





YOUR VILLAGE. IN THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL

The Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences programme is taught on the main campus of Vrije Universiteit Brussel. That's right, in Brussels, the capital of Europe, home of many leading international organisations. What better place to start your quest for an international career?

Small distances, low thresholds

Stuck in traffic between class and gym? Impossible. Faculty buildings, restaurants, sports facilities and student condos mix together on a cosy green campus. Not only does this buy you time; it also opens up the potential for spontaneous meetings with new friends and a feeling of being home, right here in your new village.

Top-notch education, tailored to the human heart

Vrije Universiteit Brussel is not what you would call a very large university, but we do serve up great teaching. Part of this strength stems from the university's medium scale which allows much interaction between professors, assistants and students. There is absolutely no risk of disappearing in an anonymous mass. On the contrary: small groups mean a personal touch and top-notch education.

You can stay...

... on or around campus even when your classes are out. Vrije Universiteit Brussel has excellent new sports facilities for fitness, athletics,

badminton, football and more. There's a library, you can attend open evening lectures or discussion groups, party the night away at an activity organised by one of the many student fraternities...

Or you can go...

... into town of course. VUB campus is connected to other parts of Brussels by train, tram, bus and metro. The capital of Belgium is famous for its bars with Belgian beers and its delicious Belgian cuisine. But Brussels also harbours many fine museums, theatres, clubs and concert halls. Pleasing the mind and the taste buds, that's Brussels' *mariage parfait*.

... But you're sure to grow.

Home base of the European Commission and Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and plenty of other European institutions: Brussels has evolved into a modern Babylon, a permanent get together of many cultures and nationalities on just a few square kilometres. It's the perfect place to be inspired by what the world has to offer. To build a network for life. To embrace unique opportunities.



NEW IN TOWN? WELCOME!

Campus life usually means big changes. For many people, and for you as well, we're sure, it is going to be an unforgettable experience. However, in the beginning all is new, unknown and unfamiliar so we thought we'd outline some important points about campus life in Brussels.

A year is made up of two semesters

And each semester is 13 weeks long. Each semester is followed by two weeks where you cram and prepare for exams. In Dutch they call it, 'de blok'. This period is followed by three weeks of exams, in January and in June. In case you fail some exams there are resits in August and in September. This may look like a tough schedule, but with decent planning and organisation you can manage it. In addition, there is always tutoring - both Ghent University and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel have an excellent reputation when it comes to tutoring. And when things get busy, remember this: when everybody else is working hard at the beginning of February, you'll enjoy an extra week's holiday.

Tailored to your life.

In the past, failing a course meant retaking the entire year's programme, but things have changed and are more flexible. All you do now is retake the courses you didn't finish the following year along with the new ones. This is an individual

study programme. You set up your own study programme in consultation with your study counsellor, so for instance, you can combine studying with working.

What are academic competences?

Not jumping to conclusions. Drafting a research project with confidence in order for it to meet the scientific requirements. Being able to extract the essence from a hypothesis and communicate it clearly and concisely.

Thinking outside the box and finding new and unexpected connections. These are academic competences, and at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel you will learn to master them all.



OFF TO A FLYING START

Classes start in the fourth week of September. We welcome all new students on the first day of class. During *Kick off the Campus* (the first two weeks of the academic year) you will be introduced to the university, student life and Brussels. If you have questions about Vrije Universiteit Brussel, please contact the Student Information Hub: info@vub.ac.be

Study guidance

If you find yourself in a special situation and want to combine your studies with professional sports or a job, or if you have specific learning difficulties and are wondering if your dyslexia could be a hurdle in obtaining your degree, help is available.

Study guidance counsellors can be contacted at any time via guidance@vub.ac.be

Language requirements

If you got this far in our brochure, there is little doubt that your proficiency in English is above average. However, we would still like to see some official proof of this. There are various ways to do so: by taking a recognised language test (TOEFL, IELTS or similar), by showing that you have already obtained a degree from an institution where English was the language of instruction, or by showing that you graduated from a Belgian secondary school. More information on how to meet our language requirements can be found here: www.vub.be/admission

Tuition fees

All Belgian universities offer high-quality education at a very reasonable cost. The exact tuition fee depends on your nationality (EEA or non-EEA) and the number of credits you enroll for. The tuition fee for one year varies between €900 and €3000. For more information go to www.vub.be/en/tuition-fees

Application

Convinced this is the right programme for you? You can start your application at any time, even if you haven't obtained your secondary school diploma yet. In this case we will keep you informed on when to take the next step. If you are a student from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) we advise you to start your application well in time for the deadline. More information on the application procedure and deadlines can be found on: www.vub.be/enroll



10-12 JAN 2019
HAASRODE

17-19 JAN 2019
GHENT

24-27 JAN 2019
KORTRIJK

31 JAN - 2 FEB 2019
ANTWERP

14-16 FEB 2019
GENK

SID-ins

SID-ins are the higher education fairs organised by the Flemish government. You can meet us in the five Flemish provinces. The fairs are open to all (and free!) on Saturdays.

www.vub.ac.be/en/sid-in

29-31 OCT 2018

4-8 MAR 2019

Try-out classes

While high school students enjoy their well-deserved break from school, we open our doors and invite you to our open classes. That's right: you can just walk into our auditoriums, pick out a folding chair and follow along with our courses. No preferential treatment, no custom workshop: just life as it is at the VUB.

www.vub.ac.be/en/try-out-classes

24 MAR 2019

28 APR 2019

7 SEP 2019

Infodays

Are you interested in studying at VUB? Come to one of our infodays where you will meet your future professors and fellow students. Ask them any question you want. All student facilities are open too.

www.vub.ac.be/infoday

23 SEP 2019

Your first day as a student

We welcome all new students at the start of the academic year. This is the moment when you get practical information about studying, an introduction to student life and the chance to meet new people.