



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL

joint degree with



GHENT
UNIVERSITY

SO CIAL SCIE NCES

www.vub.be/social-sciences

180
ECTS

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Vrije Universiteit Brussel

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Pleinlaan 2 - 1050 Brussels
studentenrekrutering@vub.be

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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 created an interdisciplinary curriculum that encourages problem-based thinking. As Albert Einstein already noted, humans' behaviour is difficult to understand and even harder to predict. Probabilistic sciences at best, the social sciences perform best in close conjunction to each other, allowing to complement and, at times, challenge disciplinary approaches to the same problem. To prepare a new generation of thinkers, unrestrained by disciplinary boundaries, the programme relies on the combined experience of two universities and seven academic departments. But, as our experiences of the previous years have taught us, our students are our greatest teachers. When students of more than 60 nationalities come together to learn about 'globalisation', 'democracy', and 'cultural differences', these concepts are not abstractions, but come to live and provide plenty of material for debate. Add to this a highly motivated teaching staff, intensive methodological training, and guest lectures from renowned experts, and the BSc. Social Sciences offers you a unique launch to your professional career."

Prof. dr. Eline Severs (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



International, interdisciplinary, interactive

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 – a focus on contemporary problems across the globe. Being capable of seeing the difference between noise and signal is more crucial than ever. The 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



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

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.



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

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 Europe 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.

Brussels: 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 campus of Vrije Universiteit Brussel, where the BScSS programme is mainly 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.

About courses at Ghent University

Although the BScSS programme is mainly taught on the campus of Vrije Universiteit Brussel, some courses take place at Ghent University. This is especially the case for the third bachelor year, when approximately half of students' courses are organised in Ghent. This allows students to make use of the Ghent infrastructure and develop close contacts with Ghent staff in the context of their bachelor paper research. Founded in 1817, Ghent University is a key center of research and higher learning in Belgium, and a top-100 university globally. Its eleven faculties offer more than 200 degree-programs and provide a place of study and work to more than 46,000 students and 15,000 employees. Our credo is 'Dare to Think', challenging staff and students to look at the world from different perspectives, and to question otherwise taken-for-granted perspectives and truths.

The Ghent University Faculty of Political and Social science is comprised of four academic departments: Political Science, Sociology, Communication Sciences and Conflict and Development Studies. The Department of Political Science houses considerable expertise in EU and global governance studies as well as local and national politics in Belgium. The Department of Sociology excels in the fields of sociology of health, education and migration. The Communication Studies department has a strong focus on digital media and critical media studies next to the classic focus on press and film. And the Department of Conflict and Development Studies—ranked amongst the top 50 development studies departments in the world—focuses on political processes in the global south, with core specializations in the Middle East and Africa.

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 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 make up 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.



BRINGING THE WORLD TO YOUR CLASSROOM

Throughout our lectures, seminars and discussion groups we will provide you with the intellectual tools that you need to make sense of today's complex world. However, that world is also much bigger than your classroom or campus. To help expand your horizons, your courses will regularly include guest speakers from inside and outside of academia. From ambassadors to political activists and from army colonels to Nobel Peace Prize-winners, our program prides itself on inviting speakers whose experience provides you with unique perspectives on often challenging topics. In addition, we also make sure you get to spend plenty of time outside of the classroom, either by visiting some of Brussels' key political institutions or by going out and doing some fieldwork of your own.



A lecture by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, Palestinian doctor, activist and bestselling author



Our students hard at work in the European Parliament.



A delegation of our students meeting with Nobel Peace Prize-winner Tawakkol Karman



Prof. Mona Lena Krook (Rutgers University, USA) giving a guest lecture



BACHELOR IN SOCIAL SCIENCES...

When you become a student of the Bachelor Social Sciences you will be joining one of the most nationally, ethnically and culturally diverse bachelor-programs in the country.



Loyle Wesley Campbell
@Canada

I never imagined myself studying abroad and being so welcomed. This program placed me in the heart of Europe and allowed me to feel fully invited as a part of a greater community while being able to discover the beauty of Belgium.

[#warmwelcometobelgium](#)



Zinaïda Sluijs
@Belgium

It's a luxury for a "bruxelloise" to have the entire world in my classroom without leaving my city! [#international](#)



Ana Olivares
@Mexico

This Bachelor is literally an international experience. It has shown to me that sharing, friendship and knowledge have no borders! [#mexicantalent](#) [#sprouttobebrussels](#)



Arthur Melchior Pagliarini
@Brazil

This program is a combination of a variety of excellent factors. We get to absorb knowledge from some of the best academics in social sciences. It is certainly a great experience for someone looking to pursue a career in social sciences, be it in sociology, political sciences or communication studies. [#interdisciplinarity](#)



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...THE WORLD IN YOUR CLASSROOM

With students from more than 60 different nationalities,
the world will quite literally be your village.



Ruben Janze Lindberg

@Sweden

Being in my last semester of the programme I cannot help feeling extremely grateful for all it has given me. Each semester has changed how I view the world. But most importantly, constant throughout the programme, a student body which engages me in how we should [#changetheworld](#).



Maria-Lucia Rebreaan

@Romania

The program challenges its students every day through the demanding essays and interesting debates. The professors are devoted to making the journey easier, but most of all interesting. Nowhere else can a program like ours be found. [#unique](#)



Ilaha Aliyeva

@Azerbaijan

The experience that VUB, and especially Social Sciences gives you is completely unique and will last a lifetime. Not a lot of places will give such diversity in such intimate setting. [#diversity](#)



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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.

Classes will be organised both in Brussels (VUB) and in Ghent (Ghent University). Students in this programme commute between both cities and can make use of all campus facilities of both universities.

BACHELOR YEAR 1	ECTS
Introduction to sociology	6
Introduction to political science	6
Introduction to communication studies	6
European history	6
Introduction to the history of political ideologies	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
Media, culture and diversity	6
Quantitative research methods seminar	6
Qualitative research methods seminar	6
Seminar current issues 2	6

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

You'll find more info on page 16 and 17.

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 thinkers in social theory	
Health sociology	
Social demography	
Sociology of work and employment	
Sociology of education	
Sociological perspectives	
Generalized linear techniques	
Orientation Political Science	42
International relations theory	
History of globalisation	
Contemporary politics in the global south	
Democratic theory and practice	
Political processes and structures of the EU	
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	
EU media policy	
Cultural studies	
Content and textual analysis	
Bachelorpaper	12

ZOOMING IN ON THE CURRICULUM

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 beginning of the Second World War. T.C.W. Blanning's history of modern Europe 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.

Critical thinking in sociology

This course forms the sociological component of the "Critical Thinking"-triad. Throughout this class we will use the notion of "critique" as a lens through which we will read and discuss some of the key authors that have helped define classical and contemporary sociology. Starting from Marx' and Durkheim's vision of sociological truth as inherently defined against the dominant "ideologies" or "common sense" of the day, we will work our way through the history of the discipline in order to find out what it means to be "critical" in a sociological

sense. We will look at different attempts to define “power” in its various manifestations and will devote several lectures to discussing one of the most sociological and critical concepts of them all, namely “social class”. Having acquired a series of conceptual tools that will help us to think critically about the social world throughout the semester, we will finish the lecture series by applying these tools to a contemporary empirical case.

Contemporary politics in the Global South

This course centres around politics in these parts of the world referred to as ‘the Global South’. It

introduces students to the complex and dynamic nature of politics in Southeast and East Asia, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa). Various current political developments in these regions (such as violent protest, military interventions, peace processes, democratisation) will be discussed in class, starting from concrete case-studies from different continents. By linking these to broader theoretical debates, students learn to critically analyse political concepts such as state-society relations, legitimacy, revolution, political authority and political culture from a Global South-perspective.

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

Picture this: you aced your final exams and are about to receive your bachelor diploma. You're as proud as can be - and you should. But... what's next? You'd be surprised to find that so many opportunities are out there, simply 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 into 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 CAPITAL OF EUROPE

The Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences is taught on the main campus of Vrije Universiteit Brussel. That's right, in Brussels, capital of Europe and 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? Not a chance. 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 our teaching skills are unrivaled. Part of this strength stems from the university's medium scale which allows more interaction between professors, assistants and students. There is absolutely no risk of disappearing in the masses. On the contrary: small groups result in a personal touch and quality 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 an extensive 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 delicious Belgian cuisine. But Brussels also harbours many fine museums, theatres, clubs and concert halls. Tickling the mind and 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 constant 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 for rigorous exam preparation and other activities. In Dutch they call it, 'de blok'. This period is followed by three weeks of exams, both in January and June. In case you fail some exams there are resits in August and September. This may look like a tough schedule, but with decent planning and organisational skills you will manage. 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 in 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 now. All you do now is retake the courses you didn't finish the next 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 and working.

What are academic competences?

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

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



OFF TO A FLYING START

We start off the new academic year with our orientation week (14-20 September 2020) and our Kick-off the Campus. Before your first week of classes you will be well acquainted with our university, student life and Brussels. If you have questions about Vrije Universiteit Brussel, please contact the Student Information Hub: info@vub.be

Study guidance

If you find yourself in a special situation and want to combine your studies with professional sports or a job, or 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.be

Language requirements

If you have made it to this section of our brochure, there is little doubt that your proficiency in English is above average. Still we would 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 fee for one year varies between €900 and €4000. For more information go to www.vub.be/admission

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/admission



FEB - SEPT 2021

Online Info Sessions

VUB organises online info sessions for future students during the year. A member of our academic staff explains the programme, informs you about studying at VUB, living in Brussels... And if you have any other questions, you just ask.

www.vub.be/en/open-days#info-sessions

25 APR 2021

5 SEP 2021

Open days

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

www.vub.be/en/open-days

20 SEP 2021

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.