International students

Third-country nationals

First application, registration and extension of your stay as a student in the City of Ghent

The procedure depends on the student's nationality. This brochure is for students who are not EU citizens, EEA nationals or Swiss nationals.

Do you already have an appointment for the extension of your residence document? If so, please cancel your appointment if your application can be done through the e-form!
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This text contains links to examples of residence documents or information pages (indicated by an Internet icon in the margin).
Who is considered an international student?
The Student Counter (Loket Studenten) is intended for foreign nationals who have their (primary) place of residence in Ghent and study in Belgium. An international student is a person who applies for a residence permit in order to study in Belgium.

Conditions for acquiring a student residence permit:
- You can present an identity document (= valid passport) (for short and long stays)
- You are a full-time and regular student enrolled with an educational institution in Belgium that is recognised, managed or subsidised by the Belgian government or with a private educational institution (for long stays)
- You do not pose a threat to public health (for short and long stays)
- You do not pose a threat to public order and safety (for short and long stays)
- You have sufficient financial means to support yourself (for short and long stays)
- You have paid the administrative fee for the processing of your residence permit application, unless you are exempt from this requirement (for long stays)

What studies entitle you to a residence permit?
- Studies that result in a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree (at least 54 credits or min. 15h/week)
- (Pre)doctoral studies
- International exchange projects (e.g. Erasmus and AFS) that result in a degree or require you to complete a number of credits (at least 54 credits or min. 15h/week)
- Student placement as part of studies in Belgium (NOT as part of studies abroad)
- Preparatory or complementary one-year higher-education programmes (at least 27 credits or min. 12h/week))
  - 7th year of secondary education in preparation for higher education
  - Language learning programmes (Dutch, French or German) for a maximum of one year in preparation for higher education in that language.

When are you considered to have sufficient financial means?
The student needs to have sufficient financial means to cover any accommodation, study, repatriation and medical costs.
The minimum for academic year 2019-2021 has been set at a monthly amount of € 666.

There are several ways to demonstrate that a student has sufficient financial means:

- **Scholarship**
- An approved commitment that expenses will be covered (annex 32) (Verbintenis tot tenlasteneming, bijlage 32).
  You can find all information on this annex on the website of the Federal Public Service (FPS) Internal Affairs
- **Blocked bank account managed by the educational institution** (= manages this account)
  - The student deposits a minimum amount of € 666 x ... months into the bank account of the educational institution.
  - The educational institution opens a blocked bank account with a Belgian bank into which the above-mentioned amount can be deposited
  - The educational institution makes a minimum amount of € 666 available to the student each month

  Chinese students can also contact the ICBC bank in Peking or Brussels to make the necessary arrangements.

- **Student loan**
- **Personal bank account**: this is assessed on a case-by-case basis and is therefore discouraged!
  - In addition, this is subject to:
    - presentation of proof of stable income and regular deposits (at least € 7992 a year (€ 666 x 12)) into a bank account in the country of origin, and
    - presentation of proof of regular transfers to the student's own bank account in Belgium (with written confirmation of irrevocable consent to these transfers)

Students are allowed to work in order to improve their financial situation, but a student job should not affect the studies and must remain secondary to the studies! A student who is in the possession of a residence card A can work up to 20 hours a week during the year and more during school holidays. The residence card mentions "arbeidsmarkt: beperkt" (labour market: restricted access). As of January 2019, it is no longer required to apply for a type C work permit.

More information on employment of third-country nationals can be found on werk.be.
**First application and extension of the residence document via the e-form**
The student shall start the application procedure for their first residence document online as soon as possible after arriving in Ghent and selecting one of the available accommodation options. In most cases this needs to be done by means of the e-form.

The student does not have to apply directly via the Student Counter.

An extended stay has to be applied for via the e-form as well.

The student will be contacted once the data entered in the e-form have been processed.

Students who reside in the centre of Ghent will be invited to go to the Student Counter in Administrative Centre Zuid (Administratief Centrum Zuid). Students who reside in one of the submunicipalities will be invited to go to the local service centre (dienstencentrum) in Wondelgem, Sint-Amandsberg, Nieuw-Gent or Gentbrugge.

**Stay of maximum 90 days (short stay)**
Third-country nationals who hold a valid type C visa, who are exempt from the requirement to hold a type C visa or who hold a valid residence card issued by a Schengen member state and who stay in the Schengen area for a maximum of 90 days have to apply for a Declaration of Arrival / Annex 3 (Aankomstverklaring / Bijlage 3).

Students who hold a type D visa (= long stay) but do not want to stay for more than 90 days can also opt for a short stay application procedure (Annex 3). To do so, they have to go to the Student Counter and sign a standard form that they do not want to make use of the type D visa.

This application procedure does not result in relocation of their primary place of residence to Belgium. They cannot apply for a parking permit for local residents or take a driving test.

In principle, these students cannot be legally employed in Belgium as they are only allowed to live here for a short period of time.

**How to apply for a Declaration of Arrival?**
Students are required to submit the e-form within three working days of their arrival in Belgium. All steps of the form have to be followed in order to complete the application.
The student will be asked to upload a scan of their passport and type C visa / valid residence card issued by a Schengen member state.

An email will be sent to the student to confirm that the application has been received.

At a later point in time, the student will receive an email invitation from the Student Counter to go to the Student Counter in Administrative Centre Zuid or, depending on the address, to a service centre and bring the required original documents in order to collect annex 3.

To collect annex 3, the student brings along the following:

- a valid passport
- a valid visa (for third-country nationals who need to have a visa) or a valid residence card issued by a Schengen member state
- correct and full postal address
- one recent passport photo that meets the legal quality requirements (you can find a photo booth in block A in Administrative Centre Zuid)
- € 13 (in cash or by debit card)

Annex 3 can only be extended in exceptional cases. To apply for an extension, students have to go to the Migration Counter or visit the competent service centre (not via the e-form).

The following documents have to be presented:

- A passport (valid for at least three months after the scheduled departure date) and, if applicable, a visa or a residence card issued by a different Schengen member state
- If applicable, a booked return ticket
- Proof of travel medical insurance (valid for the duration of any extended stay in the entire Schengen area with a minimum cover of € 30,000)
- A certificate issued by an educational institution with clear indication of the end date of the studies

Students who want to stay for more than 90 days can apply for a change of status (see 'Change of Status' chapter).
Stay of more than 90 days (long stay)

Students need to apply for a type D visa with the competent Belgian diplomatic mission prior to their arrival in Belgium.

More information on the type D visa application process can be found on the website of the Immigration Office.

How to apply for the first A card?

Students are required to submit the e-form within eight working days of their arrival in Belgium. All steps of the form have to be followed in order to complete the application. The student will be asked to upload a scan of their passport, type D visa, proof of enrolment with an educational institution in Belgium and proof of sufficient financial means (scholarship, annex 32 etc.).

An email will be sent to the student to confirm that the application has been received.

The registration procedure takes some time and the A card cannot be issued immediately. That is why students should start the registration process as soon as possible. It is important to find adequate housing before starting the application process. If a student doesn't have a residence address for at least two months, the registration process will be postponed.

Students shall put their name on the doorbell and the letter box in a clear manner so as to make it easier for the police to perform residence checks.

If they stay at a private address, a community police officer will pay a visit to perform a residence check. If they stay in an officially recognised dorm, the inspection procedure is simplified (no police visit).

The competent community police officer can be found at: http://www.lokalepolitie.be/5415/contact/je-wijk

If the student is not at home at the time of the police officer’s visits, the latter will drop a residence check card (woonstvaststellingskaart) in the letter box.
A positive residence check is followed by registration in the foreign nationals register. If the residence check is negative, the registration application is rejected. The student will be informed of this by email.

As soon as the application file has been processed, the Student Counter or the competent service centre will send the student an email invitation to complete the registration process and apply for the electronic A card. It is important to inform the Student Counter if the student is unable to show up at the appointment.

All A cards issued since February 2014 are biometric. This means that fingerprints and signatures are registered electronically. When a student comes to collect the card, their fingerprints will be compared to the previous prints to make sure it concerns the person who applied for the card.

Students will bring along the following items to the appointment for the A card application:

- a valid passport
- a valid type D visa
- proof of enrolment with a Belgian educational institution
- proof of sufficient financial means (scholarship, commitment that expenses will be covered, proof of blocked bank account, ...)
- one recent passport photo that meets the legal quality requirements (there is a photo booth in block A in Administrative Centre Zuid)
the personal email invitation
€ 26 (in cash or by debit card)
a sworn translation of the student's birth certificate, if applicable (legalised or endorsed with an apostille if required)

Standard delivery time of the A card is 2 to 3 weeks. Express delivery (€95 / €148) takes 1 or 2 working days. Students will furthermore receive a printed provisional residence document (Annex 15) that is valid for the duration of this waiting period.

As soon as a student has received the PIN/PUK codes by post, the A card can be collected at the office where the application for the card was submitted. The Migration Counter (in Administrative Centre Zuid) offers the opportunity to collect the A card at the express desk (without appointment on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9am to 12:30pm and from 2pm to 4 pm, on Tuesdays from 9am to 12:30pm and from 2 pm to 7 pm; closed on Thursdays and only by appointment on Saturdays).

To collect the A card, the student brings along the following:
- Provisional residence document (Annex 15)
- PIN/PUK codes

Validity period of the A card
The residence card is valid for a maximum of one year (usually until the end of the academic year on 31 October) provided that the student meets the residence conditions throughout the stay. The validity period of the A card may be shorter in case of a shorter study period or a shorter duration of the scholarship or blocked bank account.

The A card can be renewed (see further down in this brochure).

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Doctoral students

Doctoral students can receive a type A residence card for the duration of their scholarship with a maximum of two years.

They have to provide the following documents in this respect:

- Proof of scholarship or blocked account managed by the educational institution (valid for a longer period)
- Proof of enrolment (with indication of the doctoral studies) for the current academic year

Students will report any change of address to the Migration Counter or the competent service centre without delay (even if the residence card is still valid). Any failure to do so will result in the student being removed from the Foreign Nationals register. If this happens, the residence card will become invalid and the student may lose the right of residence.

Change of status (only in case of legal stay)

Students who have the right to reside in Belgium for a short period of time (because they hold a type C visa or are exempt from visa requirement) or for a longer period of time (e.g. a family reunion visa) can apply for a student residence permit through a change of status.

A change of status is not advisable as an alternative to applying for a type D visa because:

- there is no legal deadline to approve the application for a change of status. Consequently, it may take longer before a decision is made;
- approval can never be guaranteed.

A change of status is only possible if the student presents all appropriate documents during the period of legal residence. The student will provide the documents to the Migration Counter or the competent service centre (not via the e-form). In urgent cases it is not necessary to make an appointment with the Migration Counter.

The student will bring along the following documents:

- a valid passport
- a valid residence card (for a different status) a valid visa (for third-country nationals who need to have a visa) or a valid residence card issued by a Schengen member state
- proof of enrolment with a Belgian educational institution
- proof of sufficient financial means (scholarship, blocked bank account, annex 32 etc.)
- criminal record certificate issued by the country of last residence and maximally 6 months old at the moment of the residence permit application (with translation and correct authentication/apostille if required)
- standard medical certificate
- proof of payment of the residence application fee: (€ 204 in case of a recognised or subsidised educational institution and € 358 in case of a private educational institution) into bank account number BE57 6792 0060 9235 - reference:

For exceptions and exemptions please check out the website of the Immigration Office
- Standard form with reference to art. 58 and 9.2 of the Residence Act + art. 25/2 of the RD

If one of the documents is not provided, the student must explain why this is the case in the letter of motivation. A change of status can exceptionally be requested, but the Immigration Office in Brussels will only take a decision when the file is complete.

Students applying for a change of status who have not yet received a declaration of arrival (annex 3) will receive one at that point. In order to get annex 3, they have to present all the required documents.

- a valid passport
- a valid visa (for third-country nationals who need to have a visa) or residence card issued by a Schengen member state
- correct and full postal address in Ghent
- one recent passport photo that meets the legal quality requirements (there is a photo booth in block A in Administrative Centre Zuid)

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The student will receive a receipt once all conditions for the change of status have been met and a positive residence check has been performed. This is not a residence document.

If the residence application fee is not paid, the application will be inadmissible.

*If the application has not been approved by the time the declaration of arrival expires, the student's stay is no longer legal! An application for a change of status does not give rise to a temporary right of residence pending a decision.*

If the application is approved, the student will be issued an A card. The A card can be renewed (see further down in this brochure).

**Residence application on the grounds of extraordinary circumstances (no legal residence required)**

Students who do not (or no longer) have a right of residence can apply for residence on the grounds of extraordinary circumstances, which have to be proven. Het is belangrijk dat de student deze buitengewone omstandigheden aantoont. Extraordinary circumstances are circumstances that make it impossible or very difficult for the student to return to their home country to apply for a type D visa with the competent Belgian diplomatic mission.

This application procedure is *not advisable* as an alternative to applying for a type D visa because:

- the conditions of admissibility are very strict;
- there is no legal deadline to approve the application for a change of status. Consequently, it may take a long time before a decision is made;
- approval can never be guaranteed.

Such an application cannot be submitted via the e-form.

Students can apply for residence on the grounds of extraordinary circumstances at the Migration Counter in Administrative Centre Zuid or by sending an email to loketmigratie@stad.gent.
The following documents have to be submitted:

- a letter of motivation with reference to article 9bis of the Residence Act
- proof of payment of the residence application fee (€358)
  into bank account number BE57 6792 0060 9235 - reference:
  SurnameGivennameNationalityDDMMYYYY.
  For exceptions and exemptions please check out the website of the Immigration Office
- All documents that support the letter of motivation

The student will receive a receipt once a positive residence check has been performed and the fee has been paid. This is not a residence document.

If the residence application fee is not paid, the application will be inadmissible.

*As long as the application has not been approved, the stay is not legal. The residence application does not give rise to a temporary right of residence pending a decision.*

If the application is approved, the student will be issued an A card. The A card can be renewed (see further down in this brochure).

**How to renew an A card?**
An A card can be renewed provided that the student in question has met the applicable residence conditions throughout the stay.

Students can apply for a renewal of the A card by completing the e-form.

Renewal applications have to be submitted at the latest 15 calendar days prior to expiry of the current A card. The date of submission of the e-form is considered the date of registration. If the renewal application is not registered in time, the municipality must declare the application inadmissible.

The following documents have to be uploaded into the e-form:

- A card of the previous academic year
- a valid passport
- proof of enrolment with a Belgian educational institution for the new academic year
proof of sufficient financial means for the new academic year (scholarship, blocked bank account, annex 32 etc.)
proof of health insurance for all medical expenses (valid for long stays in Belgium)
proof of examination results for the previous academic year (exam mark list and/or statement by the educational institution on why the student did not participate in the examination(s) or merely on a pro-forma basis) This is not required for PhD students.
proof of progress in studies ('credits' form to be obtained from the educational institution with possible advice on progress in studies) This is not required for PhD students.

Once the e-form has been processed, the student will be invited to present the original documents for inspection at the counter in order to apply for the A card.

**Specific residence procedure for students who have their primary place of residence in a neighbouring country – annex 33**

Students who maintain their primary place of residence in France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands or Germany but study in Belgium can opt for an annex 33. This residence procedure does not result in registration in a Belgian town. These students do not obtain a Belgian national identification number. They cannot apply for a parking permit for local residents. They can only take a driving test when they have a titular holder number, which they can apply for via the Driving Counter (Loket Rijden).

**How to apply for annex 33?**

Students are required to submit the e-form within eight working days of their arrival in Belgium. All steps of the form have to be followed in order to complete the application. The student will be asked to upload a scan of their valid passport, their valid residence card issued by the neighbouring country and proof of their enrolment with a Belgian educational institution.

An email will be sent to the student to confirm that the application has been received.
At a later point in time, the student will receive an email invitation from the Student Counter to go to the Student Counter in Administrative Centre Zuid or, depending on the address, to a service centre and bring the required original documents in order to collect annex 33.

To collect annex 33, the student brings along the following:

- a valid passport
- a valid residence card issued by the neighbouring country
- proof of enrolment with a Belgian educational institution
- one recent passport photo that meets the legal quality requirements (there is a photo booth in block A in Administrative Centre Zuid)
- € 13 (in cash or by debit card)

Annex 33 is valid for a maximum of one academic year and must be renewed annually. With each renewal, the student has to present the same documents as the year before as well as annex 33 of the previous academic year. A renewal of annex 33 also needs to be applied for via the e-form.

**Reporting a lost, stolen or destroyed residence document**

If a residence document is lost, stolen or destroyed, the student must notify the police immediately (not the Migration Counter or a service centre). The police will give a certificate (annex 12) to confirm that the loss, theft or destruction has been reported.

If it concerns an electronic residence document (A card), the student can call Doc Stop (0800 2123 2123) to put a block on the card to prevent abuse by third parties.

In addition, the student must apply for a duplicate of the residence document with the municipal authorities. A duplicate always has the same expiry date as the original document.

In case of repeated loss or theft, the municipal authorities can only issue a new residence document after an investigation has been conducted into the circumstances of that repeated loss or theft.
**Reporting a permanent departure from Belgium**

Students who intend to leave Belgium on a permanent basis must notify the municipal authorities at the earliest 8 working days before departure or upon arrival in their home country by means of the [Declaration of Permanent Departure from Belgium form](#).

Students who require a certificate of deregistration (model 8) issued by the municipal authorities have to go to the Migration Office or the competent service centre in person prior to their permanent departure from Belgium. They hand in a passport photo and return the A card to receive a model 8, an annex 37 (certificate of withdrawal of the residence card) and a copy of the A card.

It is advisable to settle any practical matters (e.g. bank transactions) for which the residence card is needed before returning it.

This does not apply to students who have an annex 3 or an annex 33.

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A model 8 document is required for certain formalities, e.g. for certain customs formalities.
Who to contact?

Migration Information Centre
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday; from 9 am to 12:30 pm
On Wednesdays also from 2 pm to 4 pm
Or by appointment
Closed on Thursdays!
infopuntmigratie@stad.gent or +32 (0)9 266 71 40

Migration Counter
Monday, Wednesday and Friday: by appointment from 9 am to 12:30 pm and from 2 pm to 4 pm
Tuesday: by appointment from 9 am to 12:30 pm and from 2 pm to 7 pm
Saturday: by appointment from 9 am to 12:30 pm (no express desk)
Closed on Thursdays!
internationalstudent@stad.gent
loketmigratie@stad.gent or +32 (0)9 266 71 50

Service centres
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 am to 12:30 pm and from 2 pm to 4 pm
Tuesday evening: from 4.30 pm to 7 pm (by appointment)
Closed on Thursdays!
- Gentbrugge Service Centre
dcgentbrugge@stad.gent or +32 (0)9 268 23 80
- Wondelgem Service Centre
dcwondelgem@stad.gent or +32 (0)9 266 85 60
- Nieuw Gent Service Centre
dcnieuwgent@stad.gent or +32 (0)9 268 21 70
- Sint-Amandsberg Service Centre
dcsintamandsberg@stad.gent or +32 (0)9 266 86 86

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