Refugee reception – Access to academic studies in the French community of Belgium – 2016-2017 academic year

Please note that refugee students are treated like Belgian students for purposes of enrolment procedures and tuition.

Refugee students can enrol as full-time students through the following procedures:

I. For Bachelor programmes

1. General admission requirements

1.1. Credentials

- EITHER a Belgian secondary school diploma (Certificat d’enseignement secondaire supérieur or CESS);

- OR a foreign secondary school diploma, officially recognised by the French community of Belgium as equivalent to a CESS and granting access to the study programme requested;

If the foreign diploma is not recognised as granting access to the study programme requested, students may seek a specific diploma to this end (diplôme d’aptitude à accéder à l’enseignement supérieur or DAES), offered by the French Community of Belgium - http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27252&navi=3742

The deadline to request an official recognition of a foreign degree is July 15.

- OR successfully passing the entrance exam for Bachelor studies and, if appropriate, the special entrance exam for Bachelor studies in engineering (these exams are held by the universities).

- (OR (this is a NEW option that will be made possible by a proposed decree; it has not yet been enacted) a foreign higher education degree officially recognised at a certain level (e.g. a foreign academic degree recognised as equivalent to a Bachelor’s in the French Community of Belgium, with no indication of a specific field;)

1.2. French language proficiency

Students are not eligible to enrol in a Bachelor programme if they have not demonstrated a certain level of proficiency in French
They may demonstrate this by:

1° either producing a degree, diploma or certificate granting access to Bachelor studies, delivered in the French Community of Belgium or certifying completion of a programme with a certain number of courses taught in French;

This means the following students are exempt from having to sit a French language proficiency exam:

- Students holding a foreign degree, diploma or certificate certifying completion of a study programme offered in an institution whose language of instruction is French.
- Students holding a secondary school diploma or an academic degree earned in an institution in which French is one of the languages of instruction, provided the relevant authorities decide to recognise this diploma or degree (the official recognition document may specify that the student is exempt from the French language proficiency exam – only if the diploma or degree is in French);

2° or passing the entrance exam for Bachelor studies or for Bachelor studies in engineering;

3° or passing a specific French language proficiency exam (held by each university);

For the 2016-2017 academic year, exam fees will be waived for newly arrived refugees.

Please note: students who need to have their credentials officially recognised are advised, in addition to applying for this recognition, to sit the entrance exam for Bachelor studies or the special entrance exam for Bachelor studies in engineering, as they may be denied official recognition of their credentials for the programme in which they wish to enrol.

2. Additional entry requirements for certain programmes

- Bachelor in Engineering with a specialisation in civil engineering or civil engineering architecture: students must pass the special entrance exam for Bachelor studies in engineering (held by each university).

- Bachelors in Medicine and Dentistry:
  1) students must sit the orientation test for the health sector (held by ARES in each university) before classes begin
  2) students may enrol only in the first year (1st group of 60 credits)
  3) in order to stay in the programme after the 1st year, students must complete at least 45 credits out of the first group of 60 credits, and reach a certain rank during the competitive exam held in June, 2017.
3. **Procedure to apply for a Bachelor programme in a university in the French Community of Belgium**

Prospective students must submit an enrolment application

**II. For Master programmes**

- **Master**

A foreign higher education degree (Bachelor or Master) officially recognised by the university (for Bachelor's degrees) or by the French Community of Belgium (for Master's degrees) or deemed by the academic board to be worth 180 credits.

If the exam board for the Master programme accepts that the student’s foreign degree(s) is(are) worth at least 180 credits, then the student is not required to apply for an official recognition of their degree(s).

Prospective students must submit an enrolment application

**French language proficiency**

Enrolling in a Master programme does not require proof of French language proficiency, except for Masters with a teaching focus (and any study programme leading to an upper secondary education teacher training certificate (AESS or ‘agrégation’)).

For Masters with a teaching focus and AESS programmes, students may be exempt from this requirement if they have:

- a degree from the French Community of Belgium
- the DAES (see above)
- a certificate proving that they have passed the entrance exam for Bachelor studies in the French Community of Belgium
- a foreign degree, diploma or certificate certifying completion of studies that include a certain number of courses in French; the government must make an order setting specific requirements for eligibility. This exemption shall only apply once these requirements have been defined.

- **Specialised Master**

Entry requirements for the Master + either a foreign Master’s degree or a recognition by the academic board of the student’s skills as being worth at least 300 credits.

Prospective students must submit an enrolment application before September 30, 2016

**III. Access to doctoral training and doctorate**

Subject to approval by the thesis committee and supervisor, a foreign Master’s degree recognised by the French Community of Belgium as equivalent to a 120-credit Master or to a foreign Master approved by the committee.
Please note that the committee may deny access to a doctoral programme, e.g. if the student's Master's degree is in a field unrelated to the doctorate or if the marks earned during their Master studies were not high enough.

IV. *Getting a degree officially recognised*

1. *Recognition of a foreign secondary school diploma as equivalent to a CESS*

Applications may be submitted to the Service des équivalences de l'enseignement obligatoire – Rue A. Lavallée, 1 – 1080 BRUSSELS.

In order to be considered, applications must include:

- A cover letter (in order to determine what type of studies the applicant is considering)
- An original proof of payment of administrative fees
- The diploma to be recognised (either the original or an authenticated copy)
- The student's transcript (either the original or an authenticated copy)
- The student's original birth certificate (or, failing that, a document proving refugee status or an ‘annex 26’ certificate)

For refugees and asylum seekers, a copy or a photo of the original diploma, transcript or birth certificate may be accepted.

Unless they were written in English, these documents must be translated into French by a sworn translator registered with the Tribunal de Première Instance.

Students may make an appointment with the department in charge of officially recognising diplomas on the following website: https://www.formulairesweb.cfwb.be/equi_ens_oblig/formulaire_equivalence.html

Please note that the deadline for applications is **July 15, 2016**. The later an application is submitted (closer to the 15 July deadline), the later the decision will be made! Students are advised to apply as soon as possible.

Administrative fees: 200 euros (150 euros for students from countries that receive aid from the OECD)

- The student may be denied recognition of their diploma: if there is no precedent available (applications are examined on a case-by-case basis), if the level of instruction or the curriculum are not at least comparable to those offered in the French Community of Belgium, or if the student's diploma would not have granted access to the study programme requested in their home country.