

Supporting refugees in their academic study projects

I. *Temporary measures*

UCL has decided to offer (free of charge) refugees planning to undertake or continue studies in higher education the opportunity to follow training in foreign languages (French, English) and to officially register for three so-called isolated courses (“cours isolés” i.e. not part of an academic track) in order to familiarise themselves with the Belgian higher education system. Refugees are exempted from tuition fees concerning both enrolment and participation in the three courses.

Practically speaking, candidates can contact:

- The director of UCL’s *Institut des langues vivantes* for language training (Philippe.Neyt@uclouvain.be);
- The faculty in charge of the three courses (<http://www.uclouvain.be/facultes.html>) the candidate wishes to attend;
- The Enrolment Office (*Service des inscriptions*) to register for these isolated courses (after the faculty has given the green light) : <http://www.uclouvain.be/inscription>.
- If need be, the Student Advisory Service (Centre d’information et d’orientation CIO - <http://www.uclouvain.be/cio>) for advice on future study track, or Lycée Martin V (UCL affiliated secondary school) for a 7th grade specialising in mathematics or sciences;
- Finally, the Student Support Service (*Service d’aide aux étudiants*) is also available to guide candidates through the various steps of the process (<http://www.uclouvain.be/aide.html>).

All useful information and contacts are available at <http://www.uclouvain.be/soutien-aux-refugies.html>.

II. *Full study programme*

The procedure for enrolment in a full study programme is available at <http://www.uclouvain.be/402536.html>. The director of the Enrolment Office is available for specific questions. Besides, a task force of the Rectors’ Council of French-speaking universities has submitted specific measures to the government in order to make enrolment procedures more flexible.

Access to undergraduate studies (1st cycle)

Access to university education in Belgium is not linked to final marks upon secondary education graduation, but to obtaining a certificate of higher secondary education (Certificat d’enseignement secondaire supérieur CESS). The conditions for access to university education without having obtained such a certificate are described at <http://www.uclouvain.be/282612>. There are ongoing negotiations on making those conditions more flexible.

Practically speaking, apart from filing a request for degree equivalence acknowledgment (<http://www.equivalences.cfwb.be>), which entails administrative (€150) and translation costs, access to university education is possible through the following options:

- Taking an admission exam to university studies (<https://www.uclouvain.be/examen-admission.html>);

- Obtaining the CESS certificate through the exam board of the French-speaking community of Belgium (<http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26897>);
- Obtaining the CESS certificate through adult education, which seems to be the most convenient option (compared with the previous two), as it allows gradual learning and it can be combined with learning French, even though it will probably take longer (1 to 2 years).

The CIRÉ (coordination et initiatives pour réfugiés et étrangers <http://www.cire.be>) can provide assistance in filing requests for degree equivalence acknowledgment.

Access to graduate studies (2nd cycle)

- If a candidate holds a higher education degree from their home country, they must apply online (<http://www.uclouvain.be/14041.html>) for enrolment in a Master's degree, and the application will be assessed by the Enrolment Office and the faculty in charge of the Master's degree programme. The application must include the degrees and details related to the certified study programmes so far, as well as the secondary education degree (updated Jan 28, 2016, more flexible procedures may be put into place).
- If a candidate has had relevant professional experience, the accreditation of prior experience track (*valorisation des acquis et de l'expérience* <http://www.uclouvain.be/vae>) can be explored. Evidence of certified degrees and acquired relevant experience remains necessary.

Access to the doctorate (3d cycle)

If the candidate is interested in research at UCL and if he holds a degree with minimum 300 credits (2nd cycle, 5 years), he can apply for a PhD programme.

All useful information and contacts are available on the Valo Doc Louvain website at: <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-482145.html>

III. Command of the French language

Sufficient command of French remains a prerequisite for successful integration in an academic study track. Several options are possible:

- French (as a foreign language FFL) courses at *Institut des langues vivantes* (4 to 6 weekly hours, as an auditing student—*élève libre*—, strong commitment and regular attendance expected), free of charge, possibly combined with three disciplinary courses, also as an auditing student, enrolment with the Enrolment Office.
- The database from SIEP (Service for information on studies and careers <http://langues.siep.be/>)
- Courses offered by organisations involved in welcoming refugees:
 - CIRÉ : <http://www.cire.be>
 - Convivial : <http://convivial.be>
 - Lire et Ecrire : <http://www.lire-et-ecrire.be>
 - Adde (Association pour le droit des étrangers) : <http://www.adde.be>
 - The Collectif des femmes at Louvain-la-Neuve : <http://www.collectifdesfemmes.be/>
- Secondary education (bridging classes for candidates not older than 18).
- Self-standing online course for beginners: *Apprendre le français avec TV5MONDE* (<http://apprendre.tv5monde.com/fr/niveaux/a1-debutant>)

- OLS courses: Refugees have no access to the online language courses organized by the European Commission for Erasmus Students: <http://www.uclouvain.be/528672.html#formations>

IV. Study costs

Refugees / Refugee applicants

- ⇒ Same status as Belgian students
- ⇒ Exemption from international fees (€835/year)

Refugees (residing for a year on Oct 31st of the year of study)

- ⇒ Can file a request for a study grant from *Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles* (exemption from international fees and tuition fees) <http://www.allocations-etudes.cfwb.be>
- ⇒ Can file a request from UCL's *Service d'aide* to cover study costs; <http://www.uclouvain.be/aide>.

Refugee applicants

- ⇒ No study grant from *Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles*
- ⇒ Can file a request from UCL's *Service d'aide* to cover study costs (tuition fee, academic expenses, travel costs...) <http://www.uclouvain.be/aide>.