

Selection and mobility ICP- and ITP scholars (2018 onwards)

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Background

Scholarship guideline

International Master Programmes (ICP) and *International Training Programmes (ITP)* are respectively master and training courses, organized at a university or university college in Flanders targeting participants from developing countries. ICPs and ITPs receive financial support through VLIR-UOS from the Belgian ministry for development cooperation (DGD). The scholarships follow the harmonized scholarship guideline of DGD. VLIR-UOS translates this harmonized scholarship guideline into its own scholarship guidelines that can be downloaded from the [VLIR-UOS website](#).

Please note the VLIR-UOS scholarship guideline and scholarship amounts for the different scholarship types can be adjusted at any time due to changes in the DGD-scholarship guideline.

Decentralized selection procedure

The selection of ICP- and ITP scholars is **decentralized** to the level of the programme organizers, but requires final approval of VLIR-UOS and DGD.

- **Candidate → Institution: direct submission.** The applicant submits the scholarship application directly to the higher education institution (HEI) / programme organizers. The institution can thus apply its own (online) application system.
- **Institution → VLIR-UOS: written procedure.** The (scholarship) application forms are read and the selection is made by the HEI / programme organizers. The role of VLIR-UOS is limited to the validation of the selection through a meta-check of the scholarship eligibility- and selection criteria, on the basis of a list of nominated candidates the programme organizers have to submit to VLIR-UOS (AB-list).

Selection ICP- and ITP-scholars

Different stages in the selection procedure

The selection of scholars takes place in 5 different stages:

1° Academic Acceptance

The organizing HEI is responsible for the academic selection of the scholarship participants of the ICP / ITP. Only candidates who are academically acceptable, can receive a scholarship.

2° Scholarship eligibility

VLIR-UOS has determined a minimum set of criteria to which the candidates should comply in order to be eligible for the scholarship. The course organizers need to check whether the candidates meet each

criterion. Only candidates who meet all the criteria are eligible for a VLIR-UOS scholarship. The criteria are to be applied very strictly, no exceptions are allowed.

3° Scholarship selection

The course organizers select the scholarship awardees on the basis of an objective evaluation of their scholarship application, and by evaluating all the scholarship selection criteria. The candidates who score best will be proposed as effective scholarship participants or as reserve candidates. The organizers will attempt to meet a gender balance amongst scholarship participants.

4° Validation by VLIR-UOS

VLIR-UOS will verify the selection and validate the list of scholarship participants within one week after submission. VLIR-UOS will do this through a meta-check of the scholarship eligibility and selection criteria, on the basis of the list of nominated candidates the programme organizers submitted to VLIR-UOS (AB-list, see further).

5° Final approval by DGD

VLIR-UOS sends a selection report with a list of validated candidates (effective and reserve candidates) to DGD for final approval.

Criteria per stage

1° Academic acceptance

Only the candidates who are academically accepted are eligible for the scholarship. Defining the academic acceptance criteria is the responsibility of the course organizers.

Under no circumstances candidates can be selected for a scholarship and thus put on the AB-list if their application does not fulfill all academic criteria. For example, if a candidate cannot provide a language certificate in line with the institutions regulations, this candidate is not eligible for a scholarship and his/her details cannot (conditionally) be added to the AB-list. In no case he/she can be invited to travel to Belgium as a scholarship recipient.

2° Scholarship eligibility

The scholarship eligibility criteria are determined by DGD and VLIR-UOS. In order to be eligible for a scholarship, a candidate must meet the following criteria:

- **Nationality:** the candidate should be a national and resident of one of the [31 eligible scholarship countries](#) at the moment of the application (not necessarily the same country).
- **Age:** The maximum age for an ICP candidate is 35 years for an initial masters and 40 years for an advanced masters. The candidate cannot succeed this age on January 1 of the intake year.

From 2018 onwards, age is no longer an eligibility criterion for ITP scholarship candidates. Depending on the objectives of the programme, the required knowledge of the candidates and the planned follow-up trajectories after completion of the programme, the course organizers can however decide to set a selection criterion related to the age of the candidates.

- **Professional experience and background:** VLIR-UOS gives priority to candidates who are employed in academic institutions, research institutes, governments, social economy or NGO's, or aim a career in one of these sectors. However, candidates employed in the profit sector (ICP and ITP) or newly graduated candidates without any work experience (ICP) can be eligible for the scholarship if a strong additional motivation is provided.

The ITP candidate should possess relevant professional experience related to the training. The ITP candidate should be employed at the time of selection and should be able to proof that he/she will remain to be employed after the training (for example by a commitment letter of the employer).

- **Former scholarships awarded** (this criterion can only be checked by VLIR-UOS)
 - The candidate can only apply and be selected for only one VLIR-UOS scholarship per year, irrespectively of the scholarship type;
 - The ICP candidate should not have been enrolled in a master programme (or equivalent) at a Belgian university before (with or without a scholarship);
 - The ITP candidate who earlier received a VLIR-UOS scholarship to participate in another ITP will not be eligible;
 - The ITP candidate who earlier received a VLIR-UOS scholarship to participate in an ICP (or vice versa) can only be selected if the previously attended course is thematically linked to the concerned ICP or ITP;
 - The ICP or ITP candidate who earlier received a VLIR-UOS scholarship to participate in a Short Training Initiative (STI, in Dutch: KOI) can only be selected if the STI is thematically linked to the concerned ICP or ITP and if the link is clearly motivated.
- Candidates working in a university where VLIR-UOS-funded IUC, TEAM or SI projects are being organized, can receive a ITP-ICP scholarship if they clearly motivate the reason of their application and clarify why the participation at the ICP or ITP programme can't be funded as part of the IUC-, Team- or SI funds.

3° Scholarship selection

- **Motivation:** it is essential that the motivation and professional goals of the candidate highlight development relevant themes which are also relevant to the course. Not only academic results are important, but also and especially the potential of the candidate to become an "actor of change" in his/her home country after the study or training.

- **Professional experience** (see also scholarship eligibility criteria): preference should be given to candidates that can demonstrate a higher possibility of generating impact through the transfer of knowledge and extension activities upon return to their home country, to address developmental problems or challenges of the country concerned.
- **Gender**: the selection team should aim at a parity or relative balance between the number of male and female candidates awarded a VLIR-UOS scholarship, given that there are enough qualitative applications.
- **Regional Balance**: the selection team will aim at a diversification of candidates from different countries and continents. The selection team will also aim to award at least 50% of the available scholarships to candidates coming from Least Developed Countries or Other Low Income Countries (defined by OESO-DAC for ODA recipients)¹, given that there are sufficient qualitative candidates from these countries.
- **Social background**: in case of two equally qualified candidates, preference should be given to candidates who can demonstrate that they belong to a disadvantaged group or area within their country or an ethnic social minority group, especially when these candidates can provide proof of leadership potential.
- **Priority** should be given to candidates who did not receive a scholarship to study in a developed country before. ICP candidates who earlier received a scholarship to obtain a master degree in a developed country can only exceptionally be selected for the scholarship and only for well-argued reasons.

Additional selection information:

- A candidate with a double nationality can only be selected for the scholarship if the candidate lives and works in a country of the country list.
- Pregnant women can postpone their scholarship award for max. 1 intake year. Pregnant scholars cannot be refused at subscription.
- Candidates cannot be refused because of a difficult situation in their home country.
- In case two selected candidates are partners, both candidates can receive a scholarship.

4° Validation by VLIR-UOS

VLIR-UOS validates the selection on the basis of a list of participants, the *AB-list*. The list of participants should be submitted to VLIR-UOS latest by **30 April for an ICP** and at least **3 months before the start of the training in case of an ITP**. This will allow the participants to timely obtain their visa. VLIR-UOS commits to validate the list of participants within 10 working days after submission.

¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20of%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20final.pdf>

AB-list

The programme organizers submit the following information to VLIR-UOS, following the timing mentioned above, in a specific Excel-format, through e-mail to dominique.haezebrouck@vliruos.be and scholarships@vliruos.be;

- 1) Overview: Total number of applications (eligible and non-eligible) and number of eligible applications (TAB 1).
- 2) A-candidates and B- candidates: overview of nominated effective scholarship participants (A) and overview of nominated participants on the waiting list (B). The amount of reserve candidates should not exceed the amount of effective candidates (minimum 5 – maximum 12). Both ranked according to priority (TAB 2).

VLIR-UOS does not require paper records / application files of candidates, but reserves the right to request these on random basis.

Refusal of candidates

VLIR-UOS reserves the right to refuse nominated candidates for the following reasons:

- The candidate was already selected for another VLIR-UOS scholarship (during the same intake year).
- The candidate submitted (in the same year or previous years) scholarship applications which were not thematically linked to the current course (the so-called “shoppers”).
- The candidate has been excluded in the past by VLIR-UOS for further participation in the scholarship award programme.
- The candidacy does not meet the eligibility and/or selection criteria for the scholarship.

If VLIR-UOS has comments on the selection and decides to refuse one or more nominated candidates:

- from the A-list: the programme will choose the most adequate candidates from the B-list to replace the refused candidate(s);
- from the A- and/or B-list: the programme can (if desired) nominate additional candidates to supplement the B-list.

Validation of selection

When VLIR-UOS has no further questions about or comments on the selection, VLIR-UOS will validate the list of participants.

5° Final approval by DGD

VLIR-UOS sends a selection report with a list of validated candidates (effective and reserve candidates) to DGD for final approval. Once DGD has signed the selection report, the selection is final and candidates can be informed about their selection. VLIR-UOS sends the signed form to the programme organizers together with an Excel file that gives an overview of the A and B-list candidates and that needs to be submitted in the VLIR-UOS database once completed.

Follow-up of selected scholarship participants

Communication of selection results

Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

- Feedback to the nominated candidates (A- and B-list):
 - A-list: email with selection result, annexes: scholarship letter, reply form, instructions
 - B-list: email with selection result

Responsibilities of the programme organizers

- Feedback to the candidates who were not selected for the scholarship.
- A-list candidates are asked to send their reply form and copy of their passport to VLIR-UOS (scholarships@vliruos.be) and the programme organizers. The programme organizers check if all info in the Database Excel file is correct and up to date (e.g. correct spelling of full name as mentioned on passport, full address, passport number). Once they have all information for all scholars, the Excel file is sent to VLIR-UOS.

Preparation of arrival of scholarship participants

Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS:

- VLIR-UOS uploads the Excel file with information of all A and B list candidates in the database.
- VLIR-UOS is responsible for the visa process. VLIR-UOS scholarship awardees qualify for a short track visa procedure and are exempted from paying visa fees to the Belgian embassy. To enable this, VLIR-UOS prepares a specific document ('DGD-certificate') and sends this to the relevant diplomatic post abroad.
- VLIR-UOS sends visa application instructions as well as the scholarship certificates to the programme organizers the moment the diplomatic posts have received the DGD certificates. The programme organisers send the information to the scholars, so they can start their visa application. In case there are problems related to the visa application, VLIR-UOS can be contacted and will get in touch with the diplomatic post and/or DVZ dealing with the application.

- VLIR-UOS prepares the scholarship contracts for the new scholars and (if relevant) for the second year students and delivers them to the programme organizers through email.

Responsibilities of the course organizers and/or ICOS

- Making flight bookings for the scholarship participants.
- Obtain the necessary insurance for the scholars: travel and medical insurance that covers the scholars minimum from the day of departure, with a minimum coverage of € 30.000 and valid in the whole Schengen area (=Schengen obligation).
- The programme organisers inform the scholars the moment they can start their visa application and send along the scholarship certificates.
- The reception of the scholars upon arrival in the location of the course and follow-up of the candidates during their stay in Belgium. These responsibilities include but are not limited to: providing suitable accommodation, registration at the higher education institution (if applicable) and other administrative issues, handing out the scholarship contracts and informing the scholar about the right and duties as a scholarship awardee. The HEI/course organizers are also the central point of contact concerning the communication with internal services of the HEI (for example: scholarship payments).

Procedure in case a scholarship awardee does not accept the scholarship

In case an **ICP scholar** does not accept the scholarship or decides to leave the course prematurely, the following actions should be taken:

- In case this happens before 1st of October of the intake year, the best qualified candidate on the waiting list will be called upon.
- In case this happens between 1st of October and 15th of October of the intake year, a candidate on the waiting list can be called upon, taking into account (i) he/she has the best chance of succeeding the course, given the classes that have been missed already (ii) the visa application procedure differs per country and can entail a more lengthy process so the candidate who has the biggest chance to obtain the visa within a reasonable time, will be contacted.
- In case this happens after 15th of October, no reserve candidate will be contacted.

In case an **ITP scholar** decides not to accept the scholarship or decides to leave the course prematurely, the following actions should be taken:

- In case this happens at least 4 weeks before the start of the programme, the best qualified candidate on the waiting list will be called upon.
- In case this happens less than 4 weeks before the start of the programme, a candidate on the waiting list can be called upon, taking into account (i) he/she has the best chance of succeeding the course, given the classes that have been missed already (ii) the visa application procedure

differs per country and can entail a more lengthy process so the candidate who has the biggest chance to obtain the visa within a reasonable time, will be called upon.

- In case this happens after the start of the classes, no reserve candidate will be called upon.

In case a scholarship awardee cancels the scholarship for non-medical reasons and last minute (meaning the scholarship can no longer be awarded to a reserve candidate), **this person will no longer be eligible to be awarded a VLIR-UOS-scholarship.**

Non-mandatory rules about who replaces who: the ranking of the candidates on the waiting list is according to priority. However, it is possible to give priority to a lower ranked person on the waiting list, in order to maintain a regional and/or gender balance and/or in order to have a greater chance to receive a visa in a timely manner.

Responsibilities of VLIR-UOS

- VLIR-UOS sends the new scholar an email with the selection results and necessary annexes, and starts the visa procedure once the scholar has accepted the scholarship.

Responsibilities of the organizers

- The course organizers inform VLIR-UOS which candidate from the reserve list should be called upon;
- Cancellation of the flight booking / made travel arrangements of the person who cancels the scholarship and make a flight booking or other travel arrangements and organize insurance for the new scholarship participant.

Timing

The timetable below takes into account the deadline for submission of the scholarship selection for **ICP programmes** (April 30). The deadline for submission of the scholarship selection for an ITP is at least **3 months prior to the start of the ITP**. Since the selection is decentralized to the HEIs, the programmes can also decide to work with a different (earlier) timing for academic and scholarship selection, as long as VLIR-UOS deadlines are respected.

November	Call for applications – promotional campaign	VLIR-UOS / course organizers
Date to be determined by HEI / course organisers	Deadline scholarship applications	HEI / course organisers
30 April	Deadline submission AB-list to VLIR-UOS (ICP)	HEI / course organisers
12 May	Validation of selection by VLIR-UOS (about 10 working days after submission by the course organisers – VLIR-UOS offices are closed May 1st)	VLIR-UOS

24 May	Final approval by DGD (about 10 days after submission by VLIR-UOS).	DGD
Latest 1 month after submission of the AB-list	Notification to the selected candidates and candidates on the reserve list	VLIR-UOS
June – July - August	Visa procedure	VLIR-UOS
June – July - August	Flight bookings, preparation of arrival of scholars	HEI / course organisers