

Practical information for incoming students - Prior to departure

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1. ADMISSION LETTER

The admission letter is your formal admission to the IOB Master programme. This admission letter is generated in Mobility Online once you have submitted the correct legalised academic documents for registration. The admission letter is required for your visa application and can also be used for study leave. You should keep your admission letter with you while you travel to Belgium: it is your formal proof of the reason you are travelling to Belgium.

2. VISA APPLICATION AND PROOF OF SOLVENCY

Visa application

All information on how to apply for visa's can be found on the [UAntwerp Visa page](#). Please note that the procedure described there does not apply to ICP Connect scholars. If you are receiving a ICP Connect scholarship, you will receive specific visa instructions from the ICP Connect scholarship office.

Demonstrating sufficient means of subsistence

When applying for a visa type D (student visa), you will need to prove that you have sufficient financial means to cover your living expenses in Belgium.

This proof can be provided by one of the following options:

1. A **grant, scholarship or loan** issued by an international or national organisation (for ex. a University)
2. An **'agreement for acceptance of financial responsibility'** (annex 32). Check the [information on the webpage of the immigration office](#) for more information.
3. **Proof of solvency:** bank guarantee or blocked account through the university:
 - a. **Blocked account through the University:** the student will transfer a certain amount to the University of Antwerp, i.e. € 1050 per month in Belgium; a total of € 12,600 and € 100 handling fee for one academic year (12 months). Upon receipt, IOB issues the proof of solvency that enables the applicant to start his/her visa application.
Procedure: submit a request for a proof of solvency to greet.annaert@uantwerp.be
 - b. **Bank guarantee:** the Belgian Government works with [Studely](#) and [Ready Study Go International](#). The IOB does not intervene or facilitate this process.

3. REGISTRATION

Registrations for the academic year 2025-2026 start on 1st July 2025 [through this link](#). You can only register if your visa is issued.

More information about enrolment is available [here](#).

4. ACCOMMODATION

The University of Antwerp has a [page dedicated to finding accommodation](#) for incoming (international) students.

Students can search for accommodation through the database called Kotweb. This website offers the largest database of student accommodation in Antwerp. Landlords who advertise their accommodation through this website comply with the statutory regulations in terms of quality, fire protection and urban development. Aside from Kotweb, the IOB also cooperates with the International Home for Foreign Students, ITBS. ITBS is not listed on Kotweb as they have a special status as student

accommodation provider. They however comply with the aforementioned regulations. You can contact the ITBS directly: <https://itbsantwerpen.be/>

Important note! It is highly recommended to inform the IOB of your future address and landlord prior to signing a rental agreement or agreeing upon a student room. We had some bad experiences with certain landlords in the past but we are not authorised to disclose the names of these landlords but we can advise through a personal conversation. Therefore, check with IOB before signing a lease: send an e-mail to greet.annaert@uantwerp.be providing the address of your student room and contact details of your landlord. If all is well, you can proceed. If we suspect a problem, then we will give you a call

Tip: do not wait until the last moment to search for accommodation! Student housing is scarce in Antwerp so book your room as soon as possible.

5. REQUIRED ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

All incoming students are required to have some knowledge of Micro- and Macroeconomics, Quantitative Data Analysis (basic statistics) and Microsoft Excel. This knowledge is essential for several courses offered in all three Master programmes.

Students who intend to choose the unit 'Regression analysis and inference' within the course Research Methods II are also required to have knowledge of Stata and Advanced Statistics.

IOB provides an online learning platform with a self-study guide that allows incoming students to refresh their knowledge or to study the required material.

The online platform <https://iobprecourse.neolms.com/> provides study guides, textbook chapters as well as online videos and tutorials on Micro- and Macroeconomics, Quantitative Data Analysis and Excel:

- Micro- and Macroeconomics introduces you to the (most) basic concepts and ideas in economics. For micro-economics, this includes among other topics, demand and supply (curves), the market equilibrium, price and income elasticity, as well as the law of diminishing returns and different market structures. For macro-economics, emphasis is put on measuring national income, economic growth and exchange rates.
- Quantitative Data Analysis refreshes your knowledge on statistics. You will be provided with a short update on sampling, and are invited to read about (and apply) univariate statistics and probability theory and are (again) introduced to inferential statistics, like confidence intervals and hypothesis testing. You will go through this material by yourself. Yet, inferential statistics will also partly be addressed in class, given its complexity and its central role in social science research.*
- Excel

An invitation to register on the online platform will be sent to you as soon as you are registered at the University of Antwerp.

Pre-test

During the introduction week at the start of their Master programme, all students are required to take a pre-test on Micro- and Macroeconomics, Quantitative Data Analysis (basic statistics) and Excel. Participation in the pre-test is compulsory, but the result is merely informative, no sanctions are imposed when failing the pre-test.

The test results of students who are interested in the Mobility Window programme may be taken into consideration during the selection process.

Students for whom this is relevant will also take a test on Advanced Statistics during the introduction week. A pre-test for Stata is organised prior to the start of the course Research Methods II.

Access and use of the platform: Please check the [instructions here](#). An e-mail invitation to register on the platform will be sent to you when you finalised your registration at the University of Antwerp.

6. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Detailed course contents are available [online](#).

All three Master programmes are structured as follows:

- 8 - 12 September 2025: Introduction Week
- 11 September 2025: Opening Academic Year 2025-2026 + graduation 2024-2025
- 15 September - 19 December 2025: Module I
- 4 - 5 October 2025: Kick-off weekend
- 20 December 2025 - 4 January 2026: Christmas holiday for students
- 8 January - 13 March 2026: Module II
- 18 March – 3 April 2026: Module III (2 ½ course weeks)
- 4 - 19 April 2026: Easter holiday for students
- 20 April – 5 June 2026: Module III Ctd. (7 course weeks)
- 8 June – 28 August 2026: Module IV (12 weeks)
- 11 September 2026: Graduation

The class schedule and the academic calendar will be made available by the start of the academic year.

7. COST OF LIVING, WEATHER AND LANGUAGE

Previous students have informed us that they were surprised by the high cost of living in Belgium. Be aware for potential misconceptions. Costs such as restaurant visits, food, public transport and recreation are certainly not cheap.

Overview of the costs:

- Tuition fee: please check the [website](#)
- Study materials: A total amount of approx. EUR 400 needs to be budgeted for the purchase of books, lecture notes, copies, etc.
- Accommodation: The average price for a student room with a shared bathroom and kitchen is EUR 440/month. The average price for a studio with a private bathroom and/or private kitchen is EUR 550/month. These amounts do not always include extra costs (gas, electricity, water, internet). Students should budget two months of rent for the deposit.
- General expenses: Besides the above expenses, students need to budget EUR 400 per month for expenses for food and beverage, medical costs, recreation, visits and personal expenses.
- Health insurance (compulsory by law): membership fee will be paid by the University for ICP CONNECT scholarship students. Other students can register at a health insurance company for EUR 120 for the academic year. The health insurance covers up to 60% of medical expenses (doctor's visits and medicines). The health insurance only reimburses expenses; this means that students always need to advance these costs.

Student job

Studying at IOB is a full-time activity. In all fairness: most international students find it hard to combine a full-time study programme with a job. However, working during the holidays or on the weekends may be feasible after a while. Basic knowledge of Dutch is often required though.

Weather

The Belgian weather is unstable and erratic. During the month of September, the weather should still be pretty nice, although the rain starts to fall by the end of the month when fall begins. October and November can be quite chilly, even though the real cold usually only gets to Belgium by the end of November. December and January can be very cold (between 10°C and -5°C) as winter then arrives with its hail and possible snow. Winter lasts until March 21 when spring starts. From then on, the weather should get less chilly and sunnier. The highest temperatures (around 25°C) are reached during the summer months July and August. It often rains in Belgium and it can get very cold, especially for people who are used to tropical temperatures, so a useful advice is to bring along some warm clothes, rain protecting clothes and an umbrella.

Language

Basically, Belgium has three official languages: Dutch (Flemish), French and German. The Northern part of Belgium (north of the capital, Brussels) is Dutch-speaking. The Southern part of Belgium (south of Brussels) is French-speaking. A small part in the east of Belgium is German-speaking. Belgian's capital Brussels is bilingual; Dutch and French. You will be staying in the Flemish part of Belgium, where Flemish is the lingua franca. Although quite some Flemish do speak English (certainly young people), we have received complaints from former students about communication problems with local Belgian people. We will offer an online crash course Dutch language in order to allow you to learn some basic words which are useful in daily life.

Information about Belgium (history, politics, health, economy, education, etc.) is available on <https://www.belgium.be/en> and <https://visitbelgium.com/>

8. BANK ACCOUNT

In general, banks will require a residence permit before students can open a bank account. However, KBC allows students to open a bank account prior to arrival in Belgium. Incoming students can open a bank account with KBC bank using the following application procedure online: [KBC bank account](#).

The manual can be downloaded [here](#). As soon as the application for a bank account is accepted, the account number will be communicated by e-mail.

It is advised to apply for the bank account not earlier than two weeks before arrival in Belgium.

ICP CONNECT scholars will need to open a bank account prior to their arrival in Belgium in order to enable the IOB to provide the scholarship allowance upon arrival in Belgium.

Tip: Do not fill out a Belgian address in the application form. The combination of a Belgian address with your international passport will hinder your application.

9. IOB FACEBOOK GROUP

IOB has created a Facebook group for the academic year 2025-2026; you can request to become a member through <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1231683681699265> (If you use an alias on FB, please inform the IOB student office so that your request can be approved. We will not accept member requests which we don't recognise based on our student lists.)

Before your arrival to Belgium, the FB group is intended to share information regarding travel/visa/... issues; i.e. to prepare your arrival and to interact between incoming students. While studying at IOB, the group will continue existing but will never be used as a tool for official communication. It rather will be

used by students mainly to share information and to exchange ideas. Once the student group of 2025-2026 is complete, only students who are officially registered will be allowed to remain a member.

10. MORE INFORMATION

More information can be found on the UAntwerp website for international degree students:
<https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/study/international-degree-student/before-you-come/>

Be aware that not all the information listed there is applicable to IOB students.