



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
BRUSSEL

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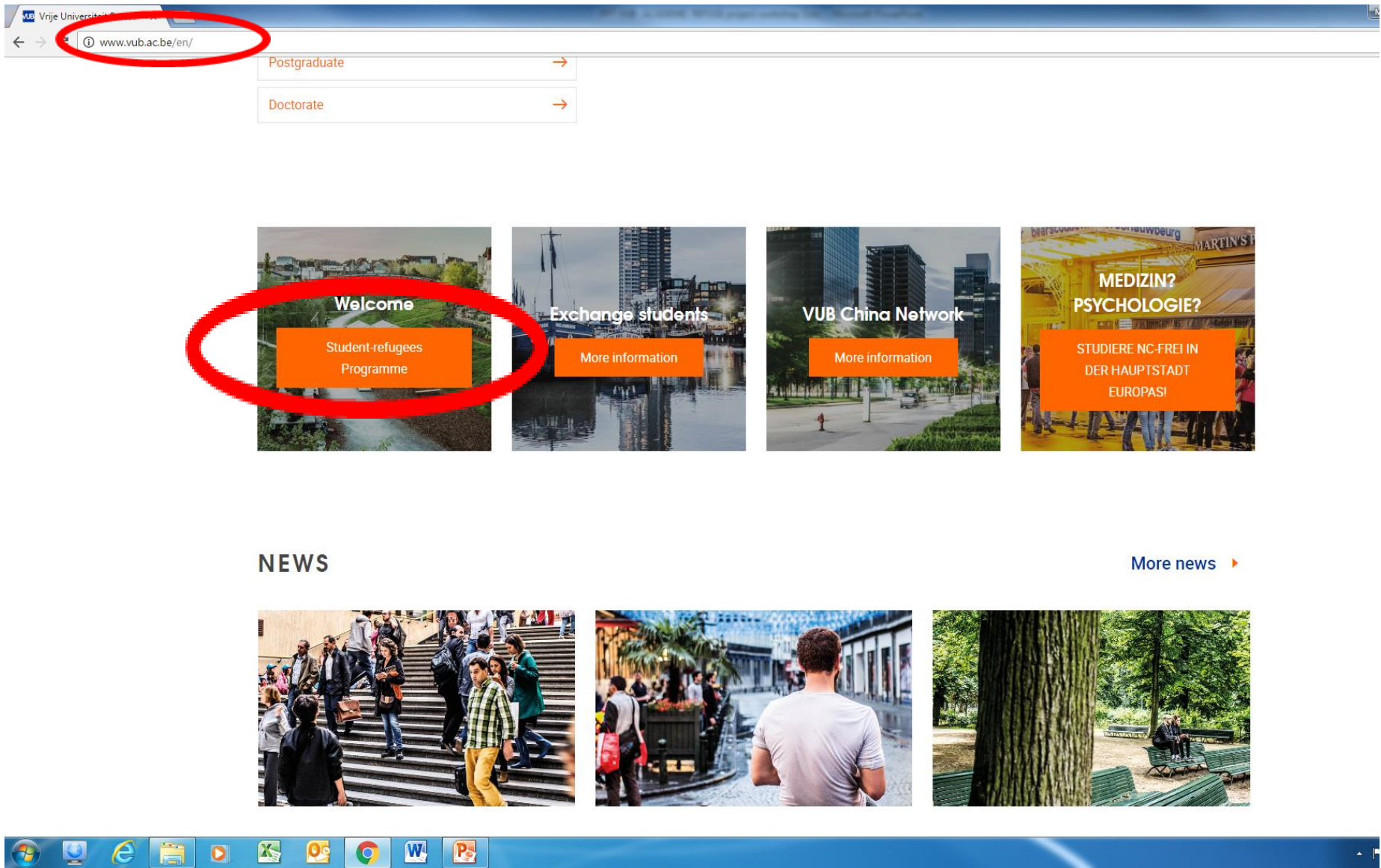


A scenic view of a park with a winding path, a metal bridge, and buildings in the background. The path leads from the foreground towards the bridge. The bridge is a simple metal truss structure. In the background, there are several buildings, some of which appear to be residential or institutional. The sky is overcast.

Welcome

Student-refugees
Programme





Welcome Student-refugees Programme

UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME TO HELP REFUGEES

The VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) actively supports the integration of refugees and encourages those with an academic background or academic ambition to make use of the various opportunities offered on campus. The VUB studies programme has been explicitly opened to help refugees. The University also supports refugees with language courses, which may help to prepare for future studies at the VUB. The offer comprises an intensive English (and Dutch) languages course in 2016 summer semester. The focus of this programme has to result in the enrollment for one of the study programmes at the VUB.

Certificate equation is not part of this programme. If you want a certificate equation, please (cfr. [NARIC-procedures](#)).

Dr. Mohammad Salman is the contact person for refugee-student matters, coordinates the project that supports access and integration of refugees at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Please feel free to get in touch!

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMMES TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

Bachelor programme

- Bachelor in Social Sciences

Master programmes

- Applied Sciences and Engineering: Applied Computer Science
- Applied Sciences and Engineering: Computer Science
- Architectural Engineering
- Biology (including ICP Human Ecology)
- Biomedical Engineering
- Biomolecular Sciences
- Business and Technology
- Chemical and Materials Engineering
- Chemistry
- Civil Engineering
- Communication Studies

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FOR MORE INFO ON THE PROGRAMMES AT THE VUB

Please register for an [Infoday](#) if you want more info on the programmes and studying at the VUB.

REGISTER FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMME

[Register now](#)



Vrije Universiteit BrusselRegistration for the Wel

www.vub.ac.be/en/welcome-student-refugees-programme/register

or these languages.

Personal information

Title *

☒ Mr.

☐ Ms.


First name: *

Last name (family name): *

Nationality/Country of Origin: *

- Select -

Date of Birth: *

Day	Month	Year	
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Email: *


Telephone number: *

Do you hold a Belgium ID? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Submit



**Policy preparation file:
Welcome Student-Refugee programme**

**May 2016
Mohammad Salman**



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Management Summary

1. The '**Welcome Student-refugee program**' was developed in the wake of the emerging refugee crisis in Europe in 2015-2016. Along with this large influx of people we noticed that 11% of the people arriving in Belgium were studying in their home country. Many of these young people had to abruptly stop their studies and flee to a safer place to live. The Vrije Universiteit Brussel has developed this program to focus on the potential students with a refugee background to give them a fair chance to continue their studies so they can build a better future for themselves.
2. The VUB took the forefront in developing a specific program for these students. It has been used as **an example of good practice** for the EUA (European University Association), the ACA (Academic Cooperation Association) and the EU (European Commission DG Education, Research and Innovation).
3. The program focusses on students who have obtained **an official refugee status** in Belgium, and are thus legally allowed to study and work in Belgium.
4. **A comparative study** has been made between the educational system in the Syria (and Iraq) region and the Belgian educational system. This study takes into account relevant comparative studies done in the Netherlands, the United States/Canada and Australia.
5. The comparative study indicates **the equivalent study levels** and the mapping of these levels into the Belgian system.
6. All students for this program have to apply via the English website of the VUB. The online registration is a pre-requisite to enter into the study program. It has been set-up to allow a **pre-admission check** of all students with a refugee background.
7. All registered students are invited for a pre-admission check. **Academic credentials are analyzed** and checked on their authenticity and a file of all these documents is



1. The educational system of the region

1.1. Education in Syria

The school system in Syria is divided into basic and secondary education levels:

Basic Education (9 years):

- First Cycle 4 years
- Second Cycle 5 years

Secondary Education 3 years

In 2014, there were approximately 2,553,000 students enrolled in basic education and 2,875,000 enrolled in secondary education. Prior to the start of the ongoing conflict, basic education enrollment was close to 93 percent. In 2015, an estimated 2 million Syrian children were out of school in Syria roughly 5,000 schools could not be used because they had either been destroyed or damaged by the war.

In the 2012/2013 academic year, there were approximately 659,394 students enrolled in public and private higher education institutions throughout Syria. The war has displaced university age Syrians (18-22 years old) in significant numbers. In 2015, the Institute of International Education (IIE) estimated that some 450,000 university age Syrians had become refugees; about 100,000 are believed to be qualified for enrollment in universities¹.

1.1.1. Secondary Education (the equivalent of High School)

AGE OF ADMISSION: Age 16

LENGTH: Three years



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SECONDARY EDUCATION: WEEKLY LESSON TIMETABLE (2014-2015)					
Subject	Number of Weekly Periods (50 minute classin) Each Grade				
	10th Grade (Common Year for Both Streams)	11th Grade (Science Stream)	11th Grade (Literature Stream)	12th Grade (Science Stream)	12th Grade (Literature Stream)
Religious Education	2	2	2	2	2
Arabic	5	4	7	4	8
English	3	3	4	4	5
French	2	2	3	4	5
Philosophy and Human Science	1	2	3	-	5
History	2	1	3	-	3
Geography	2	-	3	-	3
Math – Statistics	4	5	1	8	-
Science Education (for Literature Branch)	-	-	1	-	-
Informatics	2	2	2	-	-
Physics	2	4	-	5	-
Chemistry	2	2	-	2	-
Biology	2	3	-	3	-
Art Education	1	-	1	-	-
Physical Education	1	1	1	-	1
National Education	1	1	1	1	1
Total	32	32	32	33	33
Source: Syrian Ministry of Education					

ASSESSMENT AND PROMOTION:

Students have to pass all courses in order to continue to the next grade level. Final secondary education grades are based on a student's score on the national education exam at the end of the final year.

GRADING SCALE *"general secondary school certificate"*:

SYRIAN GRADES	World Education Services (WES) GRADE EQUIVALENTS
70-100	A
60-69	B
40-59	C
0-39	F
Source: World Education Services	

1.1.2. University Education

ACCESS:

The Ministry of Higher Education oversees the higher education sector in Syria. By law, *holders*

- Master's degrees require two years, although extensions are available.
- Doctoral degrees require a minimum of three years.

PROGRAMMES OF STUDY:

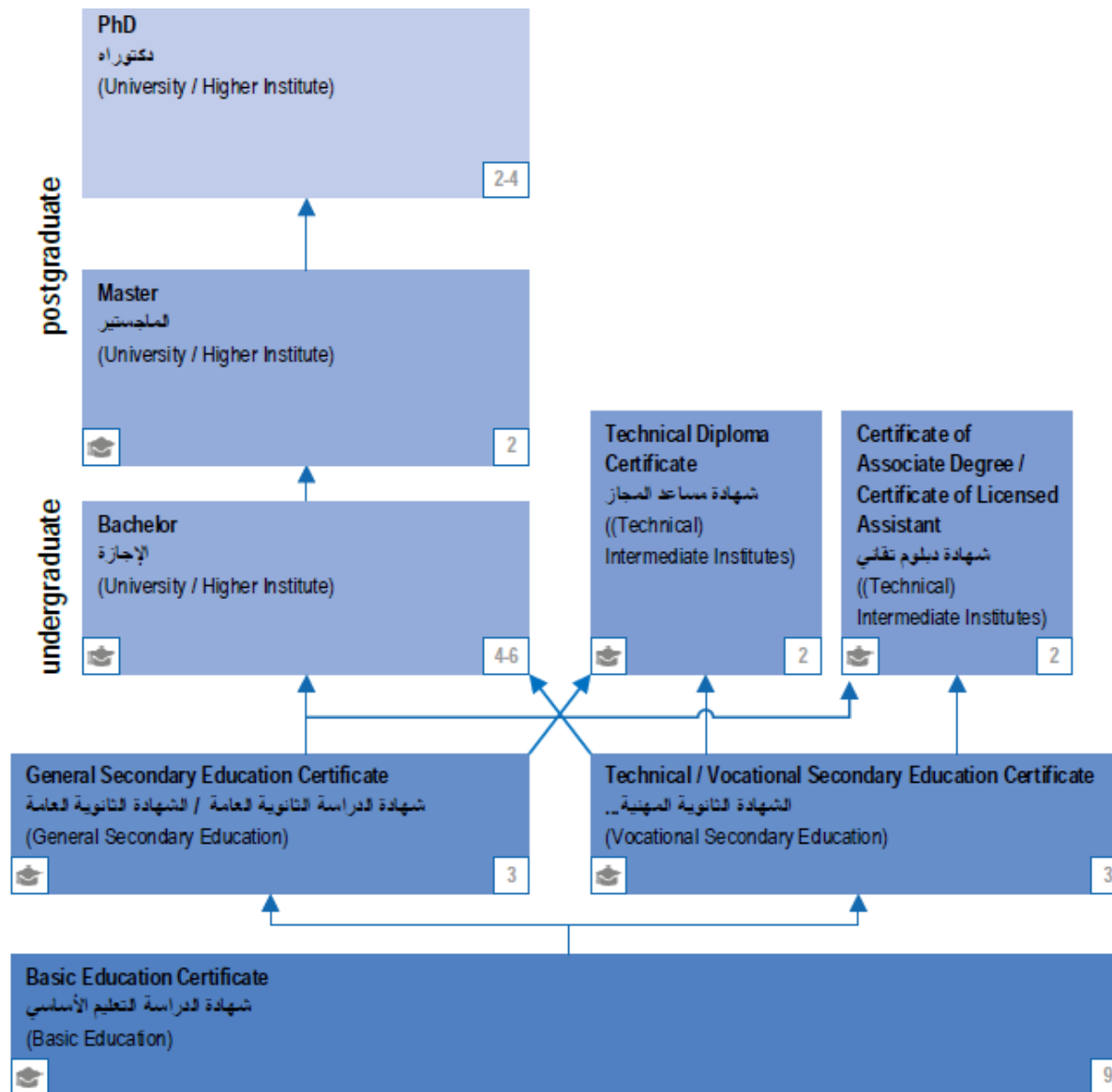
LEVEL	DEGREE	INSTITUTION TYPE	PROGRAMME LENGTH	GRADUATION REQUIREMENT
Stage I	Diploma	Technical Institutes	2 years	- Minimum GPA 50%
	Bachelor's degree	Universities	4-6 years	- Minimum GPA 50% or 60% - Project/research/training/internship
Stage II	Higher Diploma	Universities	1-3 years	- Minimum GPA 60% - Project/research
	Master's degree	Universities	2 years	- Minimum GPA 60% - Thesis
Stage III	Doctoral degree	Universities	3 years (min)	- Minimum GPA 60% - Dissertation

Source: World Education Services

Intermediate studies are offered at technical/intermediate institutes. These institutes offer specialization in a variety of fields: industry, agriculture, technology, administration, economics, business, teacher training for basic and lower level secondary education, transportation,



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1.1.3. List of universities in Syria

Public universities:

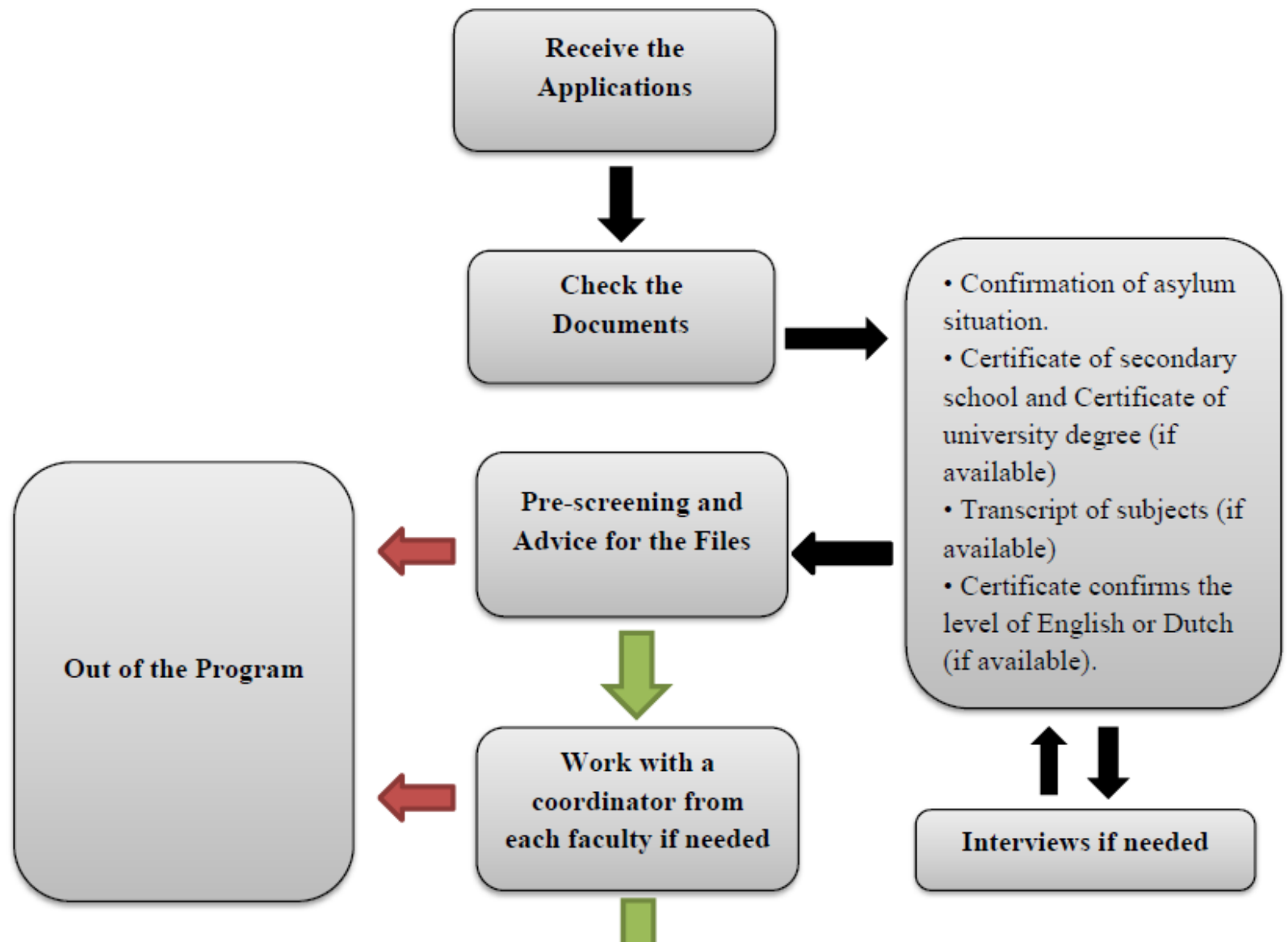
- Damascus University in Damascus (Still working)
- Aleppo University in Aleppo (Still working)
- Tishreen University in Lattakia (Still working)
- Al-Baath University in Homs (Still working)
- Al Furat University in Deir ez Zor (Stopped due to the war)
- Syrian Virtual University in Damascus (Still working)

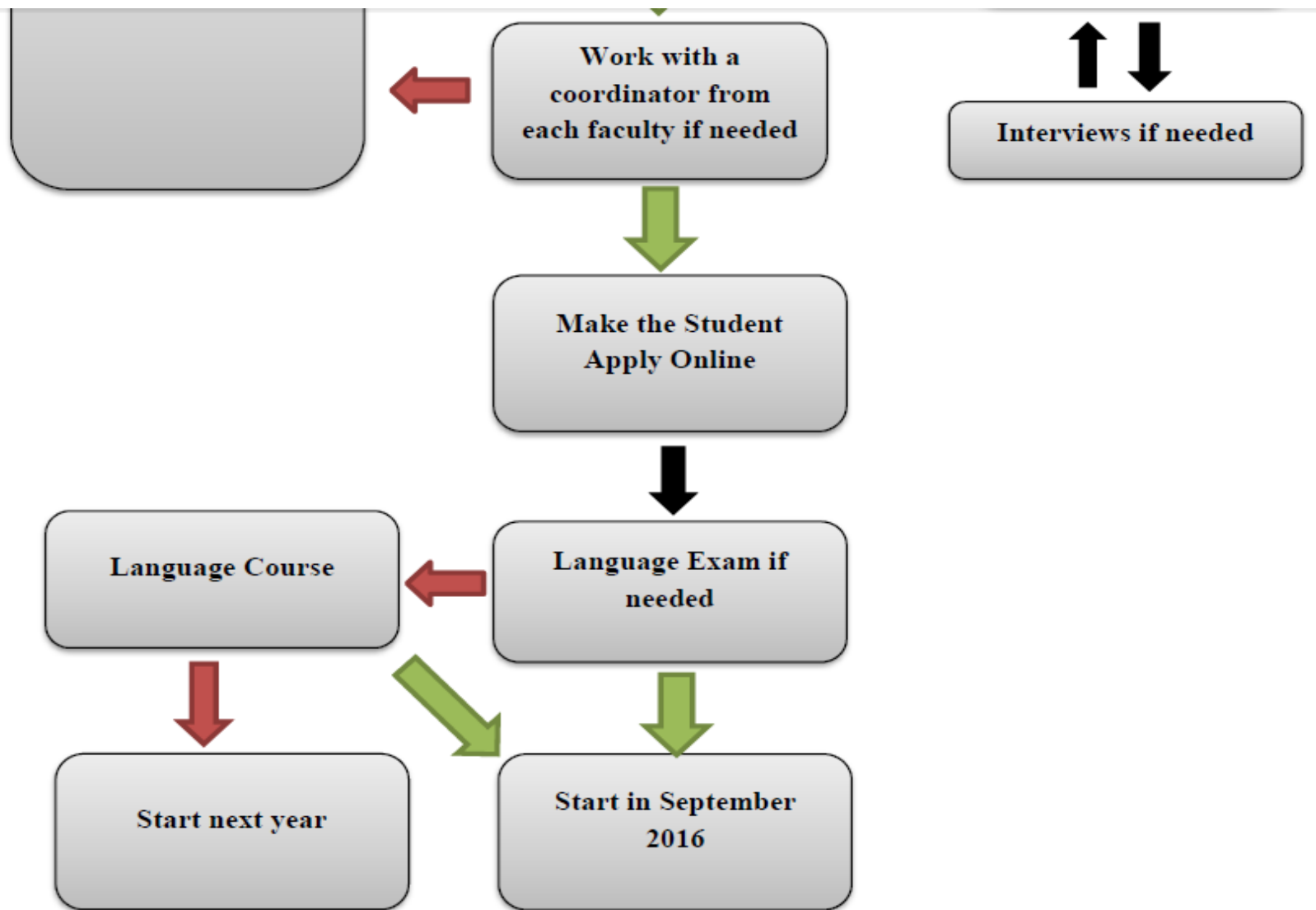
Higher technical institutes:

- Higher Institute of Marine Research (Still working)
- Higher Institute of Water Resource Management (Still working)
- Higher Institute of Business Administration (Still working)
- Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts (Still working)
- Higher Institute for Applied Sciences and Technology (Still working)

Private universities:

- Al Rasheed International Private University for Science & Technology (Still working)
- International University for Sciences and Technology (IUST) (Still working)
- University of Kalamoon - Deir Atieh (Still working)
- The Arab European University - in Sahnaia, Damascus - Daraa Autostrada (Still working)
- Al Jazeera University in Deir ez Zor (Stopped due to the war)
- Yarmouk Private University (Stopped due to the war)
- Wadi International University (Stopped due to the war)
- Al-Wataniya Private University (Stopped due to the war)
- Hawash Private University (Stopped due to the war)
- Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (Still working)
- Al-Andalus University (Still working)
- Al-Shahba University (Stopped due to the war)
- Ebla Private University (Stopped due to the war)
- Mamoun University for Science and Technology (Stopped due to the war)
- Ittihad Private University (Stopped due to the war)





The educational system of the region	Mapping the educational system on the Flemish structures	Matching the files on VUB offer
"General" secondary school the "literary streams" or the "scientific streams" ⁷	Recognized by NARIC as " <i>Diploma van secundair onderwijs - algemeen secundair onderwijs</i> "	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The faculties should distinguish between the "literary streams" and the "scientific streams" (e.g., Medicine and Engineering faculties should accept only "scientific streams" of secondary school). VUB accepts the certificate with <u>grade equivalents A or B</u> (total score >60%)⁸.
Diploma (Technical Institutes 2 years)	Recognized by NARIC as " <i>Diploma van secundair onderwijs - algemeen secundair onderwijs</i> "	VUB could accept these students in Bachelor's programmes that correspond to their Diploma specialization.
Some students have not finished yet the bachelor study	-----	We need to work with a coordinator from each faculty to address these cases.
Bachelor's degree (Universities 4-6 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognized by NARIC as "<i>Bachelor</i>" Some Belgian universities accept the student, who has this certificate, to enter directly in a second year of Master 	We need to work with a coordinator from each faculty to address these cases.

We have desired to have an idea of the main difficulties these students encountered during their first year at VUB. Dr. Mohamad Salman (head of the program) and Dr. Florian Trauner started a small investigation in collaboration with five Master students (political sciences and teacher training).

The study-related challenges and how to tackle them

- The **enrolment** procedure.
- They still felt a gap of knowledge with regards to **academic English**.
- The **assessment and examination method**: oral or open book exams or having to give presentations.
- **Writing academic papers** – with correct references, citations and academic vocabulary - seem to be a source of problems for the majority of respondents.
- For these reasons, VUB has arranged “**adaptation courses**” to academic life before the start of the academic year.

2) Financial and housing-related challenges and how to tackle them

- Financial difficulties: social welfare that the living wage (even with the loan) is not enough to arrange their student life (pay for copies, books, train abonnement, laptop,...).
- The difficulty to find a housing situation. As they are depending on the social welfare, many landlords do not want to rent their apartment to them.
- Transport: expressed their displeasure about the long train distances they have to undertake.

3) Social- and integration-related challenges and how to tackle them

- Through the analysis of the interviews, it becomes clear that in the beginning the majority of the interviewees felt lost not knowing anyone and not knowing the university. Therefore many expressed the usefulness of having a buddy that could be a first social contact with the university, a first help for the “basic” questions, someone with whom they could practice Dutch, French or English, and someone that could introduce them to activities.

Social integration through study
Added value to the economical
situation
Giving people a future

