

# Changing Higher Education in Flanders

BELGIUM ]

**BOLOGNA**



Ministry of the Flemish Community  
Department of Education

**VLHORA**

**VLHORA**

Flemish Council of *Hogescholen*



**VLIR**

Flemish Interuniversity Council

## Changing Higher Education in Flanders, Belgium



### 1. The Bologna Declaration

**When in June 1998** the Ministers of Education of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom signed an agreement to harmonise their education systems, they may not have fully realised the implications of this initiative. It is only with the Bologna Declaration, signed in June 1999 by a more representative group of European Education Ministers, that the full impact became clear, for this agreement comprises a commitment of the 29 signatory European Countries to a convergence of their higher education systems on a voluntary basis.

**This consensus was reached mainly for three reasons:**

- First**, the experience under Socrates showed that a large scale mobility of students clashes with the different structures and education systems in Europe.
- Second**, a growing tension was felt between country-based systems and the internationalisation of activities and careers.
- Third**, the diminishing attractiveness of Europe's universities compared to those from the United States and Australia became apparent.

**'Bologna' as the new process is now commonly called**, focuses on six action lines:

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility
5. Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

**'Bologna', however, is not a one-time achievement**, but rather a continuous process, the ultimate goal of which is to create a 'European Higher Education Area'.

The deadline set for the implementation of the Bologna objectives is 2010.

### 2. Changing Structures

**After signing the Bologna Declaration** the Flemish Minister of Education started a process to reform the Flemish higher education system according to the Declaration principles.

**Within the next years some major changes** will take place in the structure of higher education in Flanders. Since the Flemish Parliament still has to give the final approval on this reform, this information is provided on a provisional basis.

**One of the first objectives** in this transformation process is to stimulate co-operation between institutions of higher education. Therefore universities and *hogescholen* have drawn up agreements in order to create 'Associations', linking the *hogescholen* to universities.

From the academic year 2004-2005 onwards, this reform will affect the degrees that are awarded by universities and *hogescholen*.





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### 2.1. undergraduate studies: Bachelor's degree

All students will obtain a Bachelor's degree after successfully completing a study period of at least three years (180 ECTS-credits).

**Profession-oriented Bachelor's degrees** will prepare students for specific professions in industry, commerce, agriculture, health and rehabilitation, social work, informatics, applied arts or the media. Courses are therefore practice-oriented and will include periods of work placement. These degrees will only be awarded by the *hogescholen*.

**Academic Bachelor's degrees** will prepare students for advanced studies at Master's level. These degrees will be awarded by universities and some *hogescholen* in the framework of an association.

### 2.2. postgraduate studies: Master's degree

**Master programmes** are characterised by the integration of education and research and a Master's thesis. They cover at least one year of study (60 ECTS-credits). Depending on the field of study some programmes may last longer.

Master programmes are organised at universities and at *hogescholen* in the framework of an association. Subsequent Master programmes are organised at universities, at *hogescholen* in the framework of an association and at postgraduate training institutions.

### 2.3. doctoral studies: Ph.D. degree

'**Doctor**' is the highest level of specialisation in scientific research. It is based on an original research project that takes at least two years, resulting in the public presentation of a doctoral thesis. This degree will only be awarded by a university.

#### ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

For **Bachelor's programmes** (both professional and academic) the general admission requirement is the Flemish 'Diploma van secundair onderwijs', the secondary school leaving certificate (or an equivalent foreign degree). Some programmes will require an entrance examination. Subsequent Bachelor's programmes require a profession-oriented Bachelor's degree.

**Master's programmes** are accessible for students with an appropriate academic Bachelor's degree. Students with a profession-oriented Bachelor's degree can enter a Master's programme, after following a preparatory programme. Subsequent Master's programmes require a Master's degree.

**Doctoral programmes** are open to graduates with a relevant Master's degree.

For the subsequent programmes and the doctoral programmes the organising institutions may impose additional admission requirements.

For a schematic overview see the chart overleaf.

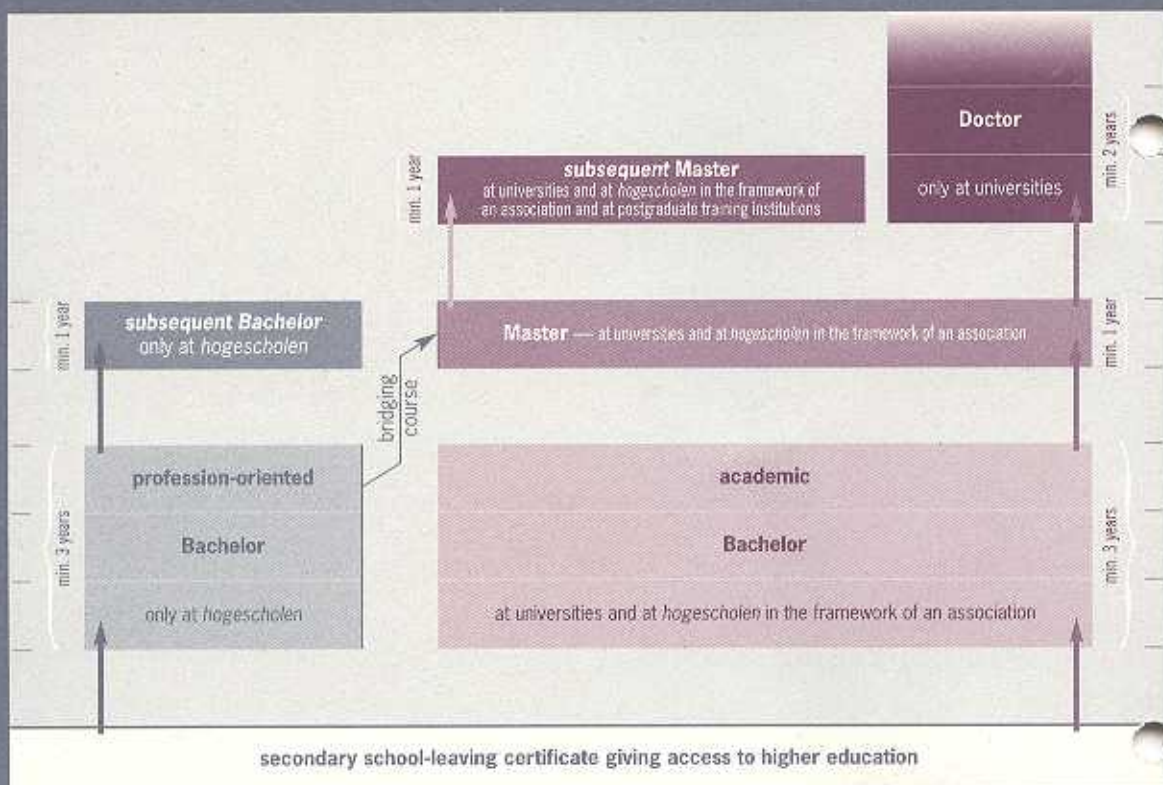
## 3. Accreditation

The new higher education decree implementing the Bologna Declaration in Flanders will introduce the concept of accreditation. Accreditation is the formal recognition of a programme based on a decision of an independent organisation, which verifies whether this programme meets the pre-determined minimal quality requirements. This quality mark will guarantee that the accredited programme offers the knowledge, understanding, skills and qualifications associated with an internationally recognised Bachelor's or Master's degree.

Accreditation will be organised in close cooperation with the Netherlands.



## c h a r t

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