

Higher education in Flanders

Country report

Adrie Dassen
Anneke Luijten-Lub

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Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS)
Universiteit Twente
Postbus 217
7500 AE ENSCHEDE
The Netherlands

T +31 53 489 3263
F +31 53 434 0392
E secr@cheps.utwente.nl
W www.utwente.nl/cheps

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Flemish name	English name
AAP	assisterend academisch personeel	auxiliary academic staff
ASO	Algemeen secundair onderwijs	General Secondary Education
AWI	de Adminsitratie Wetenschap en Innovatie	
BIS		Supervised individual study
BSO	Beroeps secundair onderwijs	Vocational Secondary Education
BuSO	Buitengewoon secundair onderwijs	special secondary education
CBGS	Centrum voor bevolkings- en gezinsstudies	Center for Population and Family Studies
DBSO	Deeltijd Beroeps secundair onderwijs	part-time vocational secondary education
DKO	Deeltijd kunstonderwijs	Part-time education in the arts
DOV	Dienst	education development service
FWO	Fonds wetenschappelijk onderzoek Vlaanderen	Fund for Scientific Research
HOBUB	Hoger Onderwijs Buiten de Universiteiten	
ICWB	Federale Interministeriële Commissie voor Wetenschapsbeleid	Inter-ministerial Conference for Research policy
IMEC		Inter-university Micro-electronics Research and Development Center
IUAP	Interuniversitaire Attractiepolen	
IWT	Vlaams Instituut voor de bevordering van het Wetenschappelijk-Technologisch Onderzoek in de Industrie	Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders
KSO	Kunst secundair onderwijs	Secondary Education in the Arts
LUC		Limburgs University Center
NFWO	Nationaal Fonds voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek	
OSP	Onderwijs voor sociale promotie	Continuing education
OU	Open Universiteit	Dutch Open University
SERV	Sociaal economische raad Vlaanderen	Social-Economic Council of Flanders
TSO	Technisch secundair onderwijs	Technical Secondary Education
TUL		Transnational University of Limburg
VDAB	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding	Vocational Training Agency
VIB	Vlaams Interuniversitair Instituut voor Biotechnologie	
VITO	Vlaams instituut voor technologisch onderzoek	Flemish Institute for Technological Research
VIZO		Flemish Institute for Entrepreneurship Training
VLHORA	Vlaamse hogescholenraad	Flemish Higher Education Institutes Council
VLIR	Vlaamse interuniversitaire raad	Flemish Inter-university Council
VLOR	Vlaamse Onderwijsraad	Flemish Education Council
VOC	Vlaamse Onderhandelingscommissie	Flemish Negotiating Committee
VRWB	Vlaamse Raad voor het wetenschapsbeleid	Flemish Science Policy Council

Introduction

Abbreviation	Flemish name	English name
VSNU	Vereniging van samenwerkende Nederlandse universiteiten	Association of Universities from the Netherlands
ZAP	zelfstandig academisch personeel	independent academic personnel

The CHEPS International Higher Education Monitor

The CHEPS International Higher Education Monitor (IHEM) is an ongoing research project, commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The project aims to provide higher education policy makers with relevant and up-to-date information on national higher education systems and policy changes. This information is presented through in-depth country reports, comparative thematic reports, annual update reports, statistical bulletins and a statistical data-base. The core countries for which this information is collected and presented include Australia, Austria, Finland, Flanders (Belgium), France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Country reports

Increasingly, governments take international trends into account when developing national higher education policies. Continuing European integration, the increasing mobility of people within the European Union, as well as supra-national initiatives deployed at the European level with respect to higher education (e.g. the Leonardo and Socrates programs) necessitate such an orientation. Policy makers therefore need to have access to adequate information on higher education structures, trends and issues in Europe as well as other countries. New technologies have opened access for everyone to vast amounts of facts and figures on higher education in almost every country. Although these data are indispensable for higher education policy makers and analysts, they often do not provide much in the way of usable information. What is lacking is a frame of reference to properly interpret the data.

Such a framework is offered by the CHEPS International Higher Education Monitor country reports. These reports have a clear structure, describing the higher education infrastructure and the research infrastructure. In addition to an in-depth description of the institutional fabric of the higher education system, the reports address issues of finance, governance and quality in higher education. The country reports provide the frame of reference for the interpretation of policy initiatives, trend-analyses and cross-country comparisons.

A wide scope of sources are used for these country reports including national statistics, (inter)national journals and magazines, national policy documents, research papers, and international documents and databases.

To keep track of the latest (policy) changes in higher education annual update reports are published.

These publications and other information on the IHEM can be found on:

http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/higher_education_monitor

1 Introduction

1.1 Flanders and Belgium

Traditionally, Belgian society was characterised by three divides. On the socio-economic front labour and capital faced each other. The Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Walloons fought out a bitter linguistic conflict. Ideologically Catholics (religious) on the one hand and liberals and socialist (profane) on the other hand disagreed strongly. These cleavages also divided the political landscape in Belgium and even led to opposite camps within the political parties themselves. Despite this fragmentation of the political culture Belgium developed into a relative stable democracy in comparison with other countries which had so many opposing groups within their borders.

After the Second World War a system of regular meetings between employer's associations, trade unions and government was established to regulate the labour market and to discuss social policies. This corporatist system of collective bargaining consisted of a number of advisory councils on social-economic policies, quasi-governmental organisations with tasks in the sphere of implementation, and boards of semi-public financial and industrial institutions, which were populated by representatives of unions, employer's associations and government. 'Within a few post-war years corporatism was strongly institutionalised in Belgium. Contact and co-operation were close, social peace was high, industrial conflicts rare' (Kickert and Hakvoort 2000).

In 1950s a major ideological conflict threatened the functioning of the Belgian political system. Catholics on the one hand and liberals and socialists on the other hand fought bitterly over the financing of Catholic education and the control over the state education. Between 1950 and 1954 the christen-democratic government outlined a financial system which was very favourable for catholic schools and universities. Moreover, the christen-democrats tried to get a grip on the ideological neutral education organised by the state. But in 1954 socialists and liberals won the national elections and formed a coalition government that reversed the decisions of its predecessor. After the 1958 parliamentary elections, which ended in a stalemate, both opposite political camps realised that no one would benefit from a never-ending controversy. Catholic, liberal and socialist politicians decided to make a compromise outside the Belgian parliament and without involvement of interest groups. Later this compromise, the so-called 'School Pact', became a law that guaranteed state-financing of Catholic education and the ideological neutral position of state education, which remained under the jurisdiction of the state authorities.

The pacification of this ideological conflict by the School Pact and the Culture Pact, which was concluded somewhat later, turned out to be lasting. Nevertheless, in 1960s a violent conflict with regard to the language question roughly disturbed the educational peace.

The Belgium episcopacy wanted to expand the activities of the French-speaking departments of the Catholic University at Leuven in Flemish Brabant. In reaction to these plans the Flemish movement organised marches on Brussels, interrupted French-language sermons in Flanders

and organised other incidents. Only after a severe cabinet crisis it was possible to pacify the linguistic controversy. The new government reserved financial means for the division of a number of universities in French-speaking and Dutch-speaking institutions. The three oppositions, which fragmented Belgian social and political life, converged gradually into two opposite poles: Flanders and Walloon. Dutch-speaking Flanders dominated by the christen democrats flourished economically, whilst Francophone Walloon dominated by the socialists went through a period of economic decay. The convergence of the three cleavages, however, made it possible to solve the problems by form of regionalisation and federalisation. This reform process, which started in the 1960s, jerked along over a period of more than 20 years. Finally in 1988 / 1989 a constitutional reform changed Belgium from a unitary to a federal state which is composed of three communities - the French-, Flemish- and German-speaking¹ ones - and of three regions - Walloon, Flanders and Brussels. 'Communities have authority in so-called 'person-related' affairs, such as culture, education, national and international co-operation, and of course linguistic affairs. Regions have authority in so-called 'soil-related' affairs, such as physical planning, environmental affairs, nature preservation and water control, gas electricity, employment, public works and transport' (Kickert and Hakvoort 2000). The Flemish community and the Flemish region decided to merge their political-administrative institutions into a Flemish parliament and a Flemish government

1.2 The education system

From 1989 onwards the responsibility for Flemish education is vested in the hands of the Flemish government. Only three very specific areas have remained under the control of the Federal State:

- Fixing the start and finish of compulsory schooling
- Minimum conditions for the award of diplomas;
- The pensions scheme for teachers

All other educational matters were transferred to the three communities. They are responsible for education within their linguistic area, and, as concerns the French and Flemish Communities, with regard to French or Dutch-speaking establishments in bilingual areas (Brussels). The educational responsibilities of each community are vested in the community council, with regard to Flanders the Flemish Parliament (legislative power), and the Community Government (legislative and executive power).

Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution guarantees freedom of education. This principle was meant to eliminate any monopoly on education. It also implies freedom of choice for parents, who may enrol their children in any school, which subscribes to their philosophical or religious convictions. Education administered by the Communities is neutral, respecting all philosophical and religious beliefs.

¹ The German-speaking Belgians, mainly living in the districts which belonged to Germany before the First World War, form a very small community in comparison to the Walloons and Flemish.

The 1983 Compulsory School Attendance Act obliges parents to have their children attend school for 12 years: from the month of September of the year in which they turn 6, till the end of June of the year in which they turn 18. Compulsory school attendance applies to Belgians as well as to foreigners living in Belgium. During the compulsory school attendance period, education is free. There is full compulsory school attendance at least up to the age of 15. By then the pupil has finished primary education and at least the first two years of full-curriculum secondary education. Full compulsory school attendance ends when the pupil reaches the age of 16. From the age of 15 or 16 onwards, there is part-time compulsory school attendance: the pupil can partially attend classes and part-time work. However, full-time education remains a possibility, and is chosen by the large majority of pupils.

Traditionally, there are three levels of education: elementary education, secondary education and higher education. In addition there is special education, for mentally or physically disabled children and adolescents who require special care, and part-time adult education.

1.2.1 Nursery and Primary education²

'*Basisonderwijs*' comprises both nursery and primary education. Since 1 September 2003, a new structure, a school cluster, has been operational in nursery and primary education. This is a partnership between a number of schools. School clusters lead to an administrative upscaling in nursery and primary education. All schools of one school cluster together must have a minimum number of 900 pupils. This structural reform adds to a more effective management of means and extends the scope of the separate schools.

There is mainstream and special nursery and primary education. Nursery education is available for children from 2.5 to 6 years. In mainstream nursery education, pre-schoolers who are not yet ready to move up to primary education at the age of 6 can spend another year in nursery education. In special nursery education, the transition to primary education can be postponed for 2 years.

Mainstream primary education is aimed at children from 6 to 12 and comprises 6 consecutive years of study. The start of primary education normally coincides with the start of compulsory education, i.e. at the age of 6. This is also the age at which few children who do not have received nursery education, start primary school. A child can spend a minimum of 4 years and a maximum of 8 years in mainstream primary education. In exceptional cases, the authorities can allow derogation from the minimum duration.

At the end of primary education, pupils who have achieved the curriculum targets receive a certificate of primary education. In special primary education, children can also obtain a certificate in some cases. This certificate is equivalent to the certificate of mainstream primary education.

² Mainly based on Ministry of the Flemish Community (2005). Education in Flanders. E. Department, Ministry of the Flemish Community: 51.

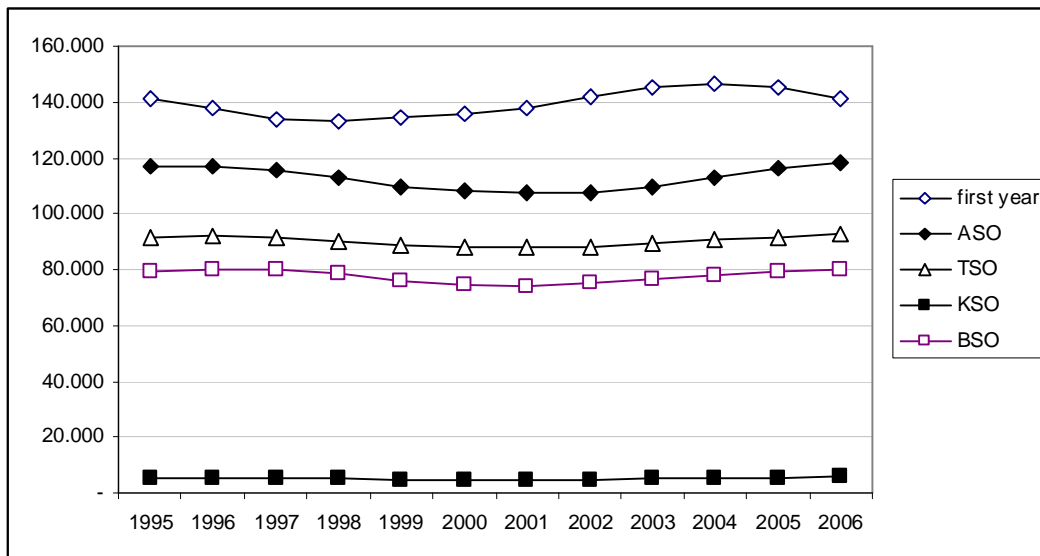
1.2.2 Secondary education³

Secondary education is aimed at young people aged 12 to 18. Since 1989, full-time secondary education has been organized in a uniform system. The uniform structure comprises stages, types of education and study disciplines. The definitive choice of subjects is postponed until the second stage so that pupils are first introduced to as many subjects as possible.

From the second stage, four different education forms can be distinguished: general, technical, vocational secondary education and secondary education in the arts.

- General Secondary Education (ASO), places an emphasis on broad general education, which provides a very firm foundation for passing on to tertiary education.
- Technical Secondary Education (TSO), places special emphasis on general and technical theoretical subjects. After TSO, young people can exercise a profession or pass on to tertiary education. This education also includes practical classes.
- Secondary Education in the Arts (KSO), combines broad general education with active art education. After KSO, young people can exercise a profession or go to tertiary education.
- Vocational Secondary Education (BSO), is a practical type of education in which young people learn a specific profession in addition to receiving general education.

Figure 1-1: Enrolment in secondary education



Source: (Vlaamse Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming 2007)

In the second and third stage there is a common and an optional part. In the optional part, the core curriculum is supplemented with a broad range of possible subjects. In the third stage, the specific education can be further narrowed down with a view to the ultimate choice of profession or possible educational careers in tertiary education. In the fourth stage, consisting

³ Mainly based on **Ibid.**

mainly of nursing education, no core curriculum is imposed because of the specificity of the training.

A pupil gains a certificate of secondary education after successfully completing six years of ASO, TSO, or KSO, or seven years of BSO. With a certificate of secondary education from any school, type of education or course of study, a young person has unrestricted access to tertiary education.

From the age of 15 or 16, pupils can transfer to a part-time system. Young people can follow training in part-time vocational secondary education (DBSO). They can also opt for a work placement while receiving entrepreneurship training or for a recognized part-time training course. DBSO is organized at a part-time education centre.

1.2.3 *Special education*

Young people whose physical, psychological, social or intellectual development is hampered by a disability, or learning or behavioural difficulties, can receive special education. The years in special secondary education (BuSO), rarely coincide with school years in main stream secondary education (Ministry of the Flemish Community 2005).

1.2.4 *Further education*

In Flanders there are several publicly funded education, training and development provision schemes for adults. Within part-time adult education, 3 different actors can be distinguished:

- Continuing education (OSP)
- Supervised individual study (BIS)
- Basic education

With more than 250,000 course participants, continuing education is the most important pillar of adult education. OSP is education that supplements or is separate from the initial educational career of course participants and aims to impact knowledge, improve skills and attitudes. By attending continuing education, the course participants may obtain a recognized diploma, certificate or qualification.

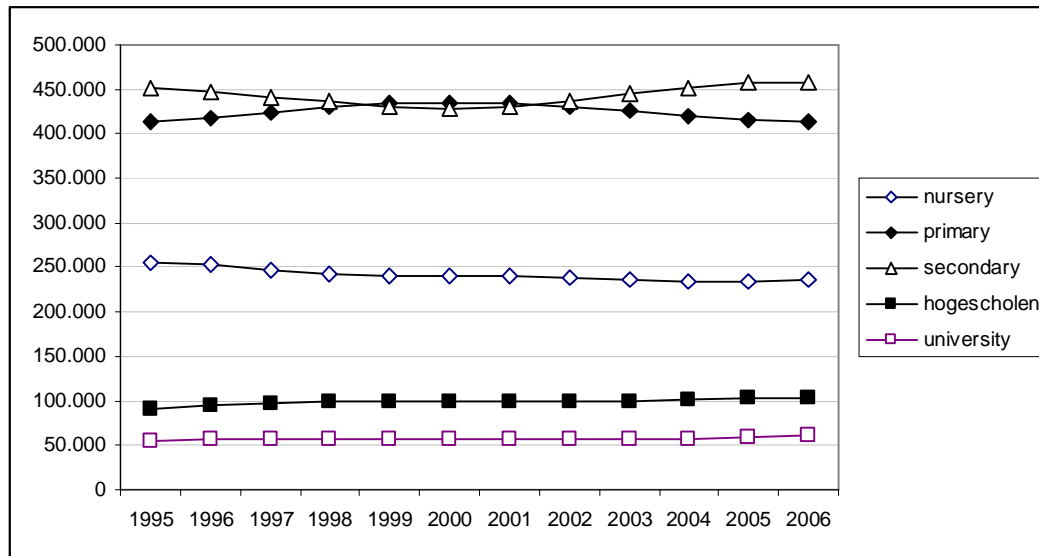
OSP participants must have finished full-time compulsory education. For some training programmes, specific entry requirements apply. The course participant pays an enrolment fee. The amount depends on the number of hours of the course. In some cases, participants may be exempted from paying an enrolment fee. Apart from the enrolment fee, centres can charge expenses for course materials.

Continuing education is provided in centres for adult education which are recognized and funded by the authorities

Basic education focuses on all adults who need a basic training in order to fully participate in society or follow further training. Due to a lack of schooling or to limited schooling, these people do not have enough basic knowledge, skills and attitudes. In this way, the government wishes to combat the divisions in society.

The 29 centres for basic adult education try to provide a broad and varied range of basic education programmes. Basic education has approximately 25000 course participants. Approximately the same number of Belgians and non-Belgians participate. In contrast with continuing education and BIS, courses in basic education are free.

Figure 1-2: Enrolment in Flemish education by level of education



Source: (Vlaamse Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming 2007)

2 Higher Education

2.1 Introduction

Higher education in Flanders comprises university education and one-cycle and two-cycle non-university higher education (*Hoger onderwijs buiten de universiteiten – HOBUs*). Transitions between the different types of courses in higher education are possible.

*Developments*⁴

Since the 1995-1996 academic year, the new Institutions of Non-university Higher Education Decree applied in Flanders. A central aim of this decree was to increase the autonomy of these *HOBUs* or *hogescholen*.

In 1968 the '*Nationale Raad voor Wetenschapsbeleid*' (National Council for Science Policy) published a report proposing an overall restructuring of post-secondary education and the construction of a full-fledged *HOBUs* that would no longer be tightly linked to technical secondary education.

HOBUs used to be organized in two different forms as well as in two different sorts of schools. The law distinguished two forms (Art.2): a short form (*hogeschoolonderwijs van het korte type; HOKT*) and a long form (*hogeschoolonderwijs van het lange type; HOLT*). The short form took three years (with only one exception in paramedical short form: midwifery required four years), leading to the diploma of *Gegradueerde*. All these training courses were explicitly vocation oriented. The long form of higher education had two cycles of at least two years study. The first cycle was completed with an intermediate diploma (*the Kandidaat*) and the second with a *Licentiaat* degree. In the 1995-1996 legislation, the short- and long form higher educations at *HOBUs* were redefined in one-cycle and two-cycle *hogeschoolonderwijs* (education of *hogescholen*).

On 23 October 1991 a Decree was adopted (integrated in the decree of 13 July 1994) related to the two-cycle higher education outside the university. The two-cycle education observed the same rules as university education. The main new element was the much larger autonomy of two-cycle at *HOBUs*. The *HOBUs* became more autonomous concerning the spending of their budgets. Scientific research remained the privilege of universities, but the long form type could participate in applied research by means of co-operation agreements with universities. These new rules also introduced a more flexible system for transitions between the different levels of training. Later the possibility was adopted to open the way to doctoral training at a university for students who finished the two-cycle higher education.

The higher education reform act of 4 April 2003 thoroughly changed tertiary education in Flanders (Ministry of the Flemish Community 2005). The act contains three main lines of action:

1. the introduction of the bachelor-master structure,
2. inter-institutional cooperation between a university and
3. one or more *hogescholen* and accreditation of training programmes.

⁴ This section is based on *Ibid*.

The *hogescholen* and the universities have gradually moved to introducing the bachelor-master structure from the 2004-2005 academic year onwards. The former higher education structure, i.e. basic courses of one cycle, basic courses of two cycles and academic courses, is abandoned. Higher education organized according to the bachelor-master structure is still divided in two types of education:

- Higher professional education
- Academic education

From the 2004-2005 academic year onwards, higher education comprises the following courses:

- Bachelor courses that lead to a bachelor degree
- Master courses that lead to a master degree
- Doctoral courses that lead to a doctor's degree
- Postgraduate courses
- Continuing education

There are two kinds of bachelor courses: the profession-oriented and the academic bachelor course. Only *hogescholen* offer profession-oriented bachelor courses. These courses are mainly geared towards the professional practice. Their aim is to teach students general and specific knowledge and competencies that are necessary for an autonomous exercise of one specific profession or a group of professions. The profession-oriented bachelor is trained to immediately enter the labour market.

Academic bachelor courses are offered (within the framework of an association) by *hogescholen* and universities. These courses are intended to make students pass on to the master course. The study volume of a bachelor course is at least 180 ECTS. This corresponds with three years of full-time studying.

An association is an inter-institutional cooperation between one university and one or more *hogescholen*. Associations improve interaction between education and research in the academic bachelor courses and master courses provided at *hogescholen*. Currently, there are five of these associations in Flanders:

- The Katholieke Universiteit Leuven association
- The Universiteit Gent association
- The Universiteit en hogescholen Antwerpen association
- Brussels University association
- The universiteit-hogeschool Limburg association

The master courses are offered by universities and *hogescholen* within the framework of an association. Master courses are intended to bring students to an advanced level of knowledge and competencies that are typical of scientific or artistic functioning in general and of a specific domain in particular. After completion of a master course a further training programme, the so-called subsequent master, can be followed. This training programme aims at developing an in-depth understanding or specialization in the field of the competencies

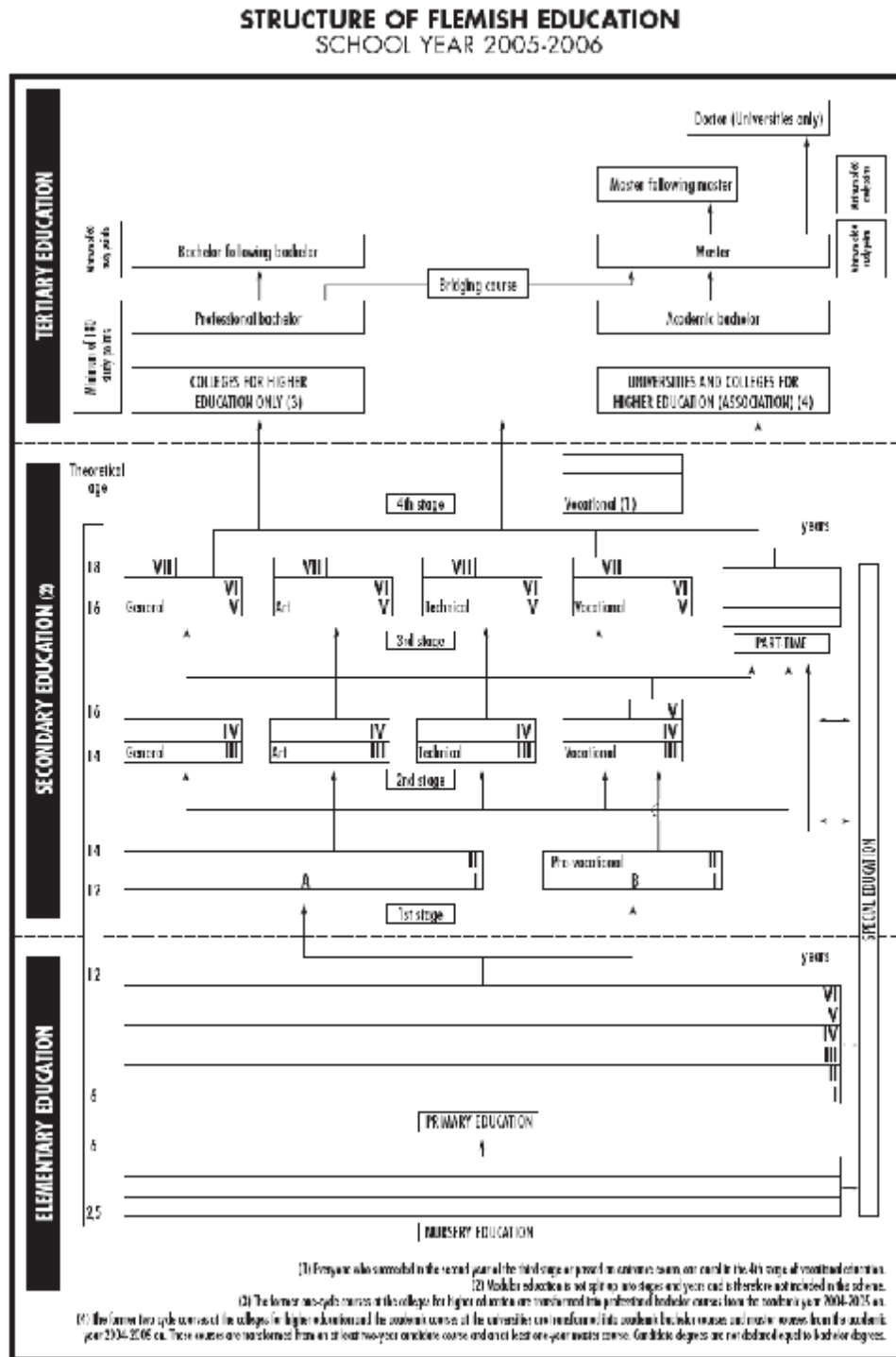
acquired during the master course. The study volume of a master course is at least 60 ECTS. This takes one year of full-time study. This also applies to the subsequent master course.

A doctoral programme is focused on the preparation of a doctoral thesis. This doctoral course is concluded with a certificate. A doctorate based on a thesis concludes with the academic degree of doctor. Only universities are allowed to deliver this doctorate degree. A master diploma delivered by a university gives direct entry to the doctorate programme. Also specific master diplomas obtained at *hogescholen* give direct entry. Holders of other master diplomas awarded by a *hogeschool* are required to sit an entry test to gain entrance.

The postgraduate courses focus on strengthening or specialization of competencies acquired in the bachelor or master programme. The study volume of a postgraduate course amounts to a minimum of 20 credits. This corresponds with one third of one year of full-time study. Both *hogescholen* and universities can organize postgraduate courses. In order to be admitted to a postgraduate course, a bachelor or master diploma is required. The institutions autonomously decide which diplomas give access to a specific postgraduate course. A postgraduate course is concluded with a certificate.

Continuing education comprises a wide range of in-service and further training programmes within the context of lifelong learning. The study volume of these courses is not defined. The institutions autonomously decide on this matter and on entry requirements.

Figure 2-1: New structure of Flemish education after implementing Bologna Declaration



Source: Ministry of the Flemish Community, VLHORA & VLIR (2002) Changing Higher Education in Flanders: Bologna

2.1.1 Access to higher education

To start a bachelor course, the student must meet the following entry requirements:

- Hold a diploma of secondary education
- Or a diploma of full-time higher education of one cycle
- Or a diploma of continuing higher education, with the exception of the certificate of teaching competence
- Or a diploma or certificate that is recognized equivalent under a law, an act, a European directive or another international agreement. If such recognition is lacking, the college of higher education or university can decide on the admission of the student.

Candidates who do not meet the above-mentioned entry conditions, may be granted admission to a bachelor course by *hogescholen* and universities because of humanitarian reasons, medical, psychological or social reasons, or the general qualification level, the merits or competencies of the candidate.

For entering a subsequent bachelor course, at least a higher education diploma is required. *Hogescholen* decide autonomously which higher education diplomas grant admission to a specific subsequent bachelor programme. Student completing a subsequent bachelor course gain a diploma.

The master courses are offered by universities and *hogescholen* within the framework of an association. Some master courses may be profession-oriented. Master courses are intended to bring students to an advanced level of knowledge and competencies that are typical of scientific or artistic functioning in general and of a specific domain of sciences or arts in particular. After a master course, a further training programme can be organized that is called subsequent master course. This training programme aims at developing an in-depth understanding or specialization in the field of the competencies acquired during the master course. The study volume of a master course is at least 60 ECTS credits. This takes one year of full-time study. This also applies to subsequent master courses.

A diploma of an academic bachelor course is a general prerequisite for entry to a master course. A profession-oriented bachelor can follow on a master course after completion of a bridging programme. *Hogescholen* and universities autonomously set up this programme. This bridging programme amounts to a minimum of 45 credits and a maximum of 90 credits. Qualifications and competencies acquired elsewhere can reduce the bridging programme to 30 or less than 30 credits. The executive board autonomously decides on this matter.

At least a higher education diploma is required for entering a subsequent master course. *Hogescholen* and universities decide for themselves which master diplomas give entry to a specific subsequent master course. Students completing a subsequent master course gain a diploma.

2.1.2 Non-university (*hogescholen*)

2.1.2.1 Structure

The Decree of 13 July 1994 stipulated that the instruction offered by the present two-cycle higher education program is on a 'university level'. As a whole, it contributes to general human education; in particular, it is directed towards the application of the sciences, independent thinking, and the development of creativity" (Art. 11 § 2). Nevertheless, a distinction between two-cycle higher education and university education is made: universities provide education based on scientific research, whereas *hogescholen* (education of *hogescholen*) provide education based on scientific knowledge. Universities and *hogescholen* also differ with regard to the influence of socio-economic organisations on the initial education program. Furthermore, fundamental scientific research is not considered a task of the *hogescholen*, but two-cycle *hogescholen* have the competence to conduct applied scientific research, preferably in co-operation with a Flemish or foreign university.

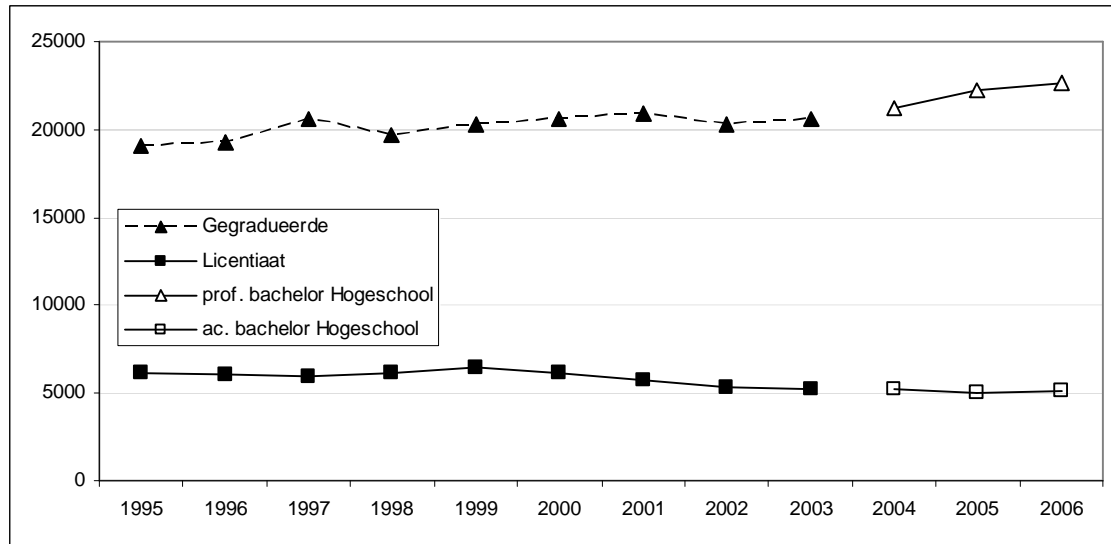
2.1.2.2 Access

Traditionally in Flanders, and previous in Belgium, access to higher education in general is open for everyone who possesses a secondary education diploma. The access is not dependent on additional requirements concerning examination subjects. An exception is made for students who have had a secondary professional training (*Beroepssecundair onderwijs*). They have to take additional courses (one school year) to get access to universities or *hogescholen*. Next to that there are other exceptions to the open access principle.

An entrance exam is required for a number of courses of *hogescholen*:

- An artistic entrance exam for audio-visual and visual arts
- An artistic entrance exam for music and dramatic arts
- An aptitude test for nautical science

Figure 2-2: New entrants in hogescholen

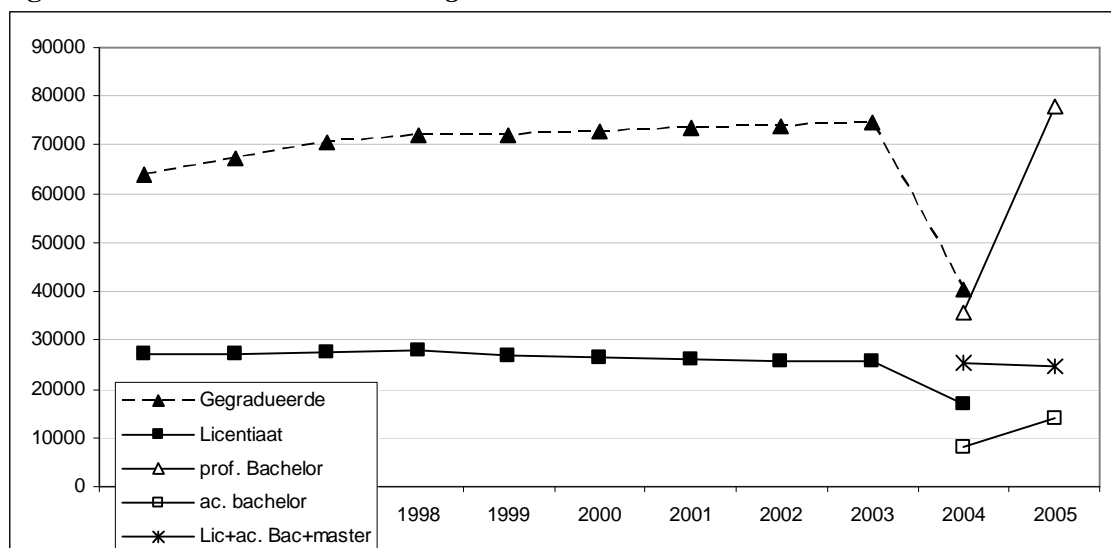


Source: CHEPS IHEM 2007

The inflow of new students into the one cycle programmes (*gegradueerde* and professional bachelor) has continued in a steady upward trend. In the two cycle programmes (*Licentiaat*, *academische bachelor*) the inflow has steadily decreased, although in 2006 that trend seems to be halted.

2.1.2.3 Participation

Figure 2-3: Students enrolled in hogescholen

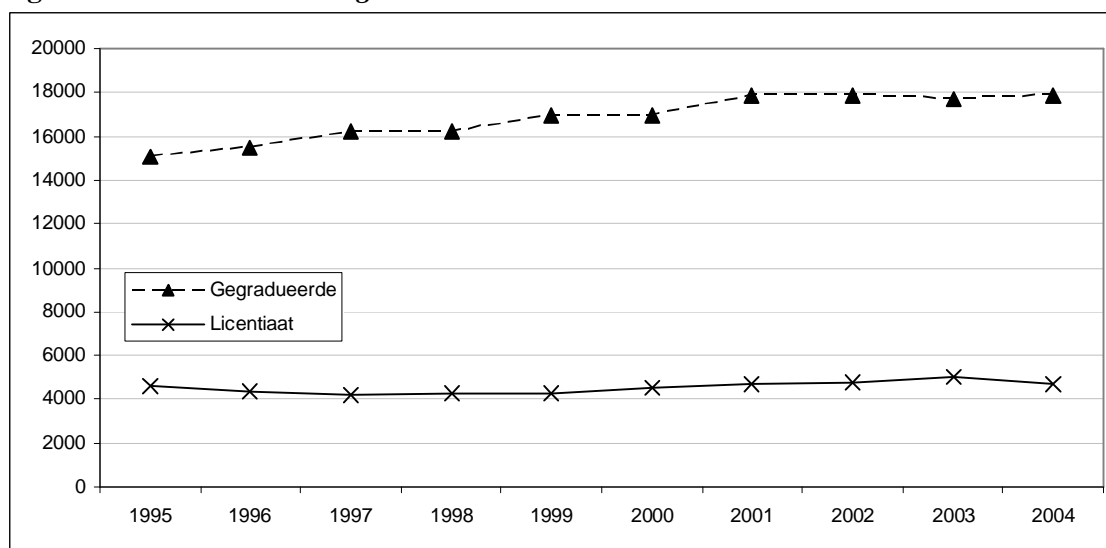


Source: CHEPS IHEM 2007

The introduction of the bachelor master structure has not lead to a change in the upward trend in enrolment in one cycle (gegradueerde) programmes. The slight decrease in enrolment in two cycle programmes (*Licentiaat*) has continued as well.

2.1.2.4 Outflow

Figure 2-4: Graduates of hogescholen



Source: CHEPS IHEM 2007

Given the decline in the number of new entrants and students, the increase in the number of *Licentiaat* graduates is remarkable.

2.2 Education –labour market

2.2.1.1 Personnel

Teaching posts at *hogescholen* are categorised into three groups⁵

1. practical lecturer ('praktijklector'), senior practical lecturer ('hoofdpraktijklector'), lecturer ('lector') and senior lecturer (hoofdlector).
2. auxiliary staff: assistant ('assistent'), doctoral assistant ('doctor-assistent') and instructor ('werkleider').
3. assistant professor ('docent'), associate professor ('hoofddocent'), professor ('hoogleraar') and full professor ('gewoon hoogleraar').

⁵ www.ond.vlaanderen.be

The positions of the first group and the second group are solely related to one-cycle courses and two-cycle courses respectively. The third group of positions may be related to both types of courses. The duties of (senior) practical lecturers and (senior) lecturers are to provide education and study guidance, but can also include project-based scientific research, provision of social services and administrative tasks. The auxiliary staff supports assistant professors, associate professors, professors and full professors of two-cycle courses by carrying out their tasks, viz. education, study guidance and research. In addition to this the duties of professors also include social services. Assistants are allowed to devote at least half of their time to prepare their doctoral thesis.

The minimal legal requirements for teaching posts at *hogescholen* are:

- practical lecturer and senior practical lecture: a diploma of one-cycle college education.
- lecturer and senior lecturer: a diploma of two-cycle higher education (*hogeschool* or university).
- assistant and instructor: a diploma of two-cycle higher education (*hogeschool* or university).
- doctoral assistant: a doctoral degree.
- assistant professor, associate professor, professor and full professor: a doctoral degree.⁶

An appointment as full professorship at a *hogeschool* is only possible when the *hogeschool* involved co-operates with a Flemish university in the disciplinary field concerning.

Furthermore, the decree on *hogescholen* contains requirements with regard to seniority:

- internal appointments as senior practical lecturer, senior lecturer, instructor or associate professor: at least two years experience as practical lecturer, lecturer, assistant, or associate professor at the *hogeschool* involved.
- internal appointment as professor: at least two years experience as associate professor or four years experience as assistant professor at the *hogeschool* involved.
- external appointment as associate professor: at least four years relevant professional experience or two years experience as assistant professor at a *hogeschool* or university.
- external appointment as professor: at least six years relevant professional experience or two years experience as associate professor at a *hogeschool* or a university, or four years experience as assistant professor at a *hogeschool* or university⁷.
- appointment as full professor: at least six years experience as assistant or associate professor at a *hogeschool* and university.

The *hogeschool* board determines the staffing level per teaching grade on an annual basis.

⁶ Additional requirements apply for a number of courses, for instance relevant professional experience (six years) for an appointment as assistant professor, associate professor, professor or full professor in audio-visual and visual arts, music, dramatic arts, architecture and product design.

⁷ With regard to external appointments the college board can deviate from these requirements if a qualified majority of two-third of the votes is available.

The following rules, however, must be taken into account:

- the combined number of senior practical lector and senior lector posts may not exceed 20% of the combined number of practical lector, senior practical lector, lector and senior lector posts;
- the number of auxiliary staff posts should amount to at least 36% of the combined number of research assistant, doctoral research assistant, senior research assistant, lecturer, senior lecturer, professor and full professor posts;
- the number of senior lecturer and professor posts should not exceed 25 % of the combined number of research assistant, doctoral research assistant, senior research assistant, lecturer, senior lecturer, professor and full professor posts;
- the number of permanent teaching posts should not exceed 64% of the total number of teaching posts, expressed in full-time equivalents.

Table 2-1: Staff at hogescholen (fte)

	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2004	2006
Teaching staff	7412	7516	7617	8139	7973	7474	7543
Support staff	1297	1432	1518	1565	1589	1680	1811

Source: (Vlaamse Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming 2007)

2.2.2 University

Academic education is offered after completion of secondary education. There are 6 university education centres in Flanders of varying size. There are two public institutions (RUG, LUC), three private institutions (KUL, VUB, KUB), and one hybrid. In 1995 the public institutions UIA and RUCA and the private institution UFSIA have merged into the University of Antwerpen.

An interesting development in Flemish higher education is the foundation of the Transnational University of Limburg (TUL). The 'Limburgs University Center' (LUC) and the Dutch University of Maastricht co-operate with regard to education and research under the name TUL. The TUL is funded through the regular payments available for the University of Maastricht and the 'Limburg University Center'. TUL started its operations in 2002.

Since 1991 the spectrum of full-time and/or part-time academic education covers 18 fields, *studiegebieden*, and combined studies. Within these disciplinary fields the decree on universities defines specific courses and determines the teaching qualifications, that is the courses they are entitled to organise. Alterations in teaching qualifications, as in the case of *hogescholen*, have to be approved by the Flemish parliament.

Students can follow courses on a full-time or part-time basis if the university offers the opportunity.

Open University

Students in Flanders can study at the Dutch Open University. This is possible because of a co-operation agreement between the Flemish Universities and the Dutch Open University

(OU). Certificates administered by the OU can be declared equivalent to the Flemish University degrees. The only entrance requirement is that students must be older than 18 years, although students are recommended to finish ASO first. Students don't enrol for a certain discipline but for one or more of the 300 courses offered.

2.2.2.1 Access

In general there are no subject requirements specified to enter the university. In order to qualify for admission to the first level of university studies students must present one of the following Flemish school-leaving certificates or a recognised foreign equivalent⁸.

- *Bekwaamheidsdiploma voor het hoger onderwijs* / Qualification for higher education; issued by a secondary school (general, technical or artistic) and officially approved by a committee *Homologatiecommissie* /;
- *Bekwaamheidsdiploma voor het hoger secundair onderwijs* / Qualification for higher secondary education;
- *Diploma van het toelatingsexamen voor de opleiding van bachelor* / Qualification for the entrance to *Kandidaat* programmes in mathematics, physics, and agricultural engineering, issued by a university or some other institution of higher education entitled to issue these certificates;
- *Diploma van het toelatingsexamen voor de opleiding van bachelor* / Qualification for the entrance to *Kandidaat* programmes in civil engineering; issued by the *Examencommissie van de Staat voor het hoger secundair onderwijs* / Federal examination commission for higher secondary education, a university or some other institute of higher education entitled to issue this certificate (*gelijkgestelde instelling*).
- *Diploma van geaggregeerde voor het lager secundair onderwijs* / Qualification for lower secondary education for general courses;
- *Diploma van technisch ingenieur* / Qualification of technical engineering for technical courses;
- *Diploma van licentiaat of commercieel ingenieur* / Qualification of licentiate or commercial engineering for courses in economic engineering; and
- *Diploma voor het hoger onderwijs van het korte type* / Qualification of one-cycle non-university higher education (full-time study-programmes)

The Flemish government prescribes general rules regarding the transfer of the holders of a professional bachelor to university degree courses (bridging courses), e.g. industrial engineer to the degree course of civil engineer or to the degree course of licentiate in chemistry.

There are a few exceptions to the open access principle. An entrance exam is required for a number of university courses:

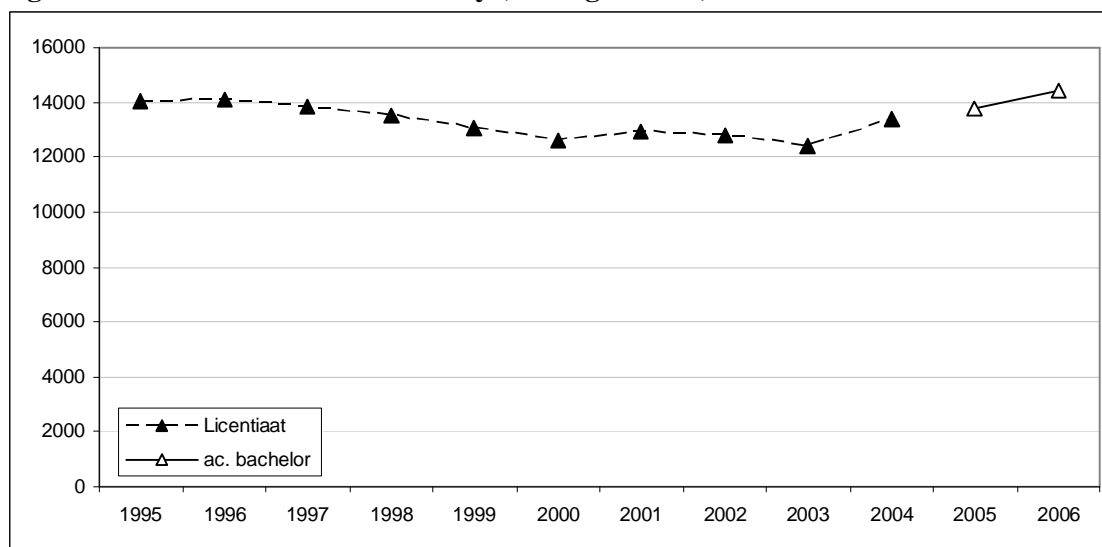
- Entrance exam for civil engineering and engineering-architecture courses
- Entrance exam for medicine and dentistry⁹

⁸ Foreign students holding the following certificates can be admitted to courses which are validated by a degree specified by the State:

Since the academic year 1997/98, medicine and dentistry applicants not only have to conform the general admission requirements, but also have to pass an entrance exam to be admitted to the first year in medicine or dentistry. The introduction of these exams was necessary due to the large numbers of Dutch students coming to Flanders to enrol in those programmes that are subject to ‘*numerus fixus* in the Netherlands (e.g. medicine, physiotherapy, dentistry). This examination consists of two parts. The first part is aimed to test knowledge and insight in science, especially physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology. The level is equivalent to the average level of the third cycle of general secondary education. The themes are interwoven with a maximum of practical medical and dental work. A student can receive 20 points for each part. He or she passes the exam if a minimum of 12 points for each part is obtained. The exam is organised twice a year before the beginning of each academic year. Students are allowed to participate in the exam twice.

As aforementioned with regard to the study of physiotherapy, the Belgian federal government decided that the number of physiotherapists who will get permission to practice is limited to 270 in 2003, 2004 and 2005. As yet the Flemish government did not make arrangements to limit the intake of first-year university students.

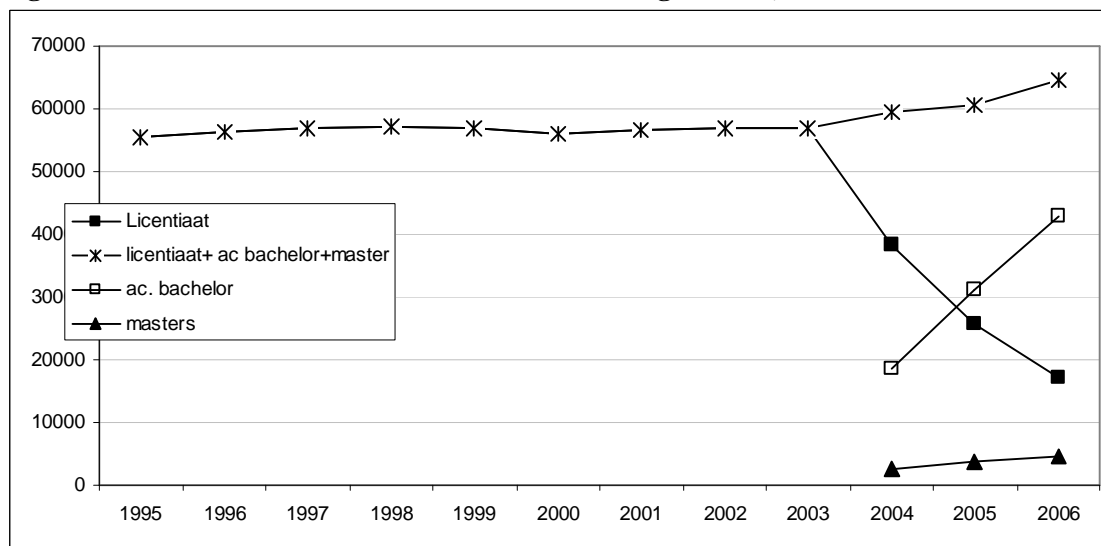
Figure 2-5: New entrants in university (undergraduate)



Source: CHEPS IHM 2007

⁹ If a candidate fails, the number of resits is unlimited.

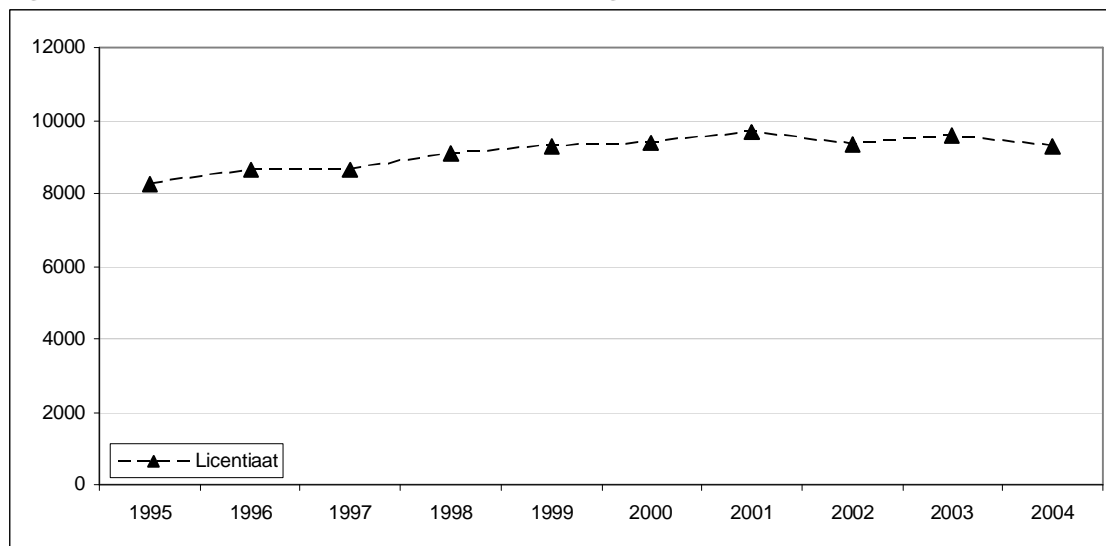
2.2.2.2 Participation

Figure 2-6: Students enrolled in universities (undergraduate, headcount)

Source: CHEPS IHEM 2007

2.2.2.3 Outflow

The year system is still one of the principal characteristics of Flemish higher education. Students have to pass annual examinations in all course components. They are only permitted to begin the next year if they have successfully completed the previous one. The rigid study-year system has been relaxed somewhat by introducing the possibility of an individually-tailored program for students who have earned half the points for a given year but did not pass certain course elements. Some institutions organise examinations each trimester or semester. However, no one is permitted to take the same exam for the same course component more than twice in one year, even if a trimester or semester system is in operation. It should be noted here that the rigid study year system in Flanders is one of the main reasons for the poor pass rate.

Figure 2-7: Graduates from universities (undergraduate)

Source: CHEPS IHEM 2007

2.2.2.4 Personnel

The Decree of 12 June 1991 represents a fundamental break with earlier laws regarding the composition of academic staff. The former subdivision into teaching and research staff has been replaced by a distinction between 'independent academic personnel' (ZAP) and 'auxiliary academic staff' (AAP)¹⁰. The structure within these categories has also been altered.

1. The independent academic staff (ZAP) is made up of the following grades:

- lecturer (*docent*)
- senior lecturer (*hoofddocent*)
- professor (*hoogleraar*)
- full professor (*gewoon hoogleraar*)
- extraordinary professor (*buitengewoon hoogleraar*, i.e. someone who holds a part-time post on the same level as that of a full professor)

2. The following grades exist amongst the auxiliary academic personnel (AAP):

- research assistant
- doctoral research assistant

¹⁰ ZAP: Independent academic personnel (teaching and permanent scientific staff), i.e. people whose salaries are paid for out of the fixed contribution from the government.

AAP: Auxiliary academic personnel (temporary scientific staff), i.e. personnel paid for out of the fixed contribution from the government.

University boards can establish their own rules for the appointment of ZAP and AAP members. A first important condition that has to be met in order to be appointed a member of the ZAP is that the person in question has to hold a doctoral diploma (with a thesis) or a diploma or certificate deemed equivalent to this in accordance with European Community directives. The government has made the universities responsible for determining the seniority conditions for appointment to a given ZAP rank. The institutions must specify their rules in this respect in their appointment regulations. The university board must seek the advice of the faculties, other internal bodies or external experts for each appointment. Appointments must be justified in each case; that is, they must be based on a comparison of the scientific and educational qualities of the candidates. A person may only be appointed a member of the AAP if he or she holds a second-cycle diploma of university education or a diploma or certificate deemed equivalent to this according to European Community directives. Research assistants may be appointed for a period of two years. This period may be renewed twice. Doctoral research assistants are temporarily appointed for two years. This mandate may be extended by a maximum of one year. Practical research assistants may be appointed for renewable periods of a minimum of one year and a maximum of five years.

The duty of auxiliary academic staff (AAP) is to support the independent academic staff (ZAP). Research assistants also have the duty of further qualifying in their academic field and are entitled to devote at least half of their time to preparing their doctoral theses. The duties of the independent academic personnel are three-fold: to carry out scientific research, to provide academic education and to provide scientific services to society..

Universities can appoint full or part-time research assistants whose duty comprises specific practical teaching assignments. Their numbers must not exceed 10% of the AAP and they can be granted the title of practical lector.

The legislator has specified that a maximum of 64% of the academic personnel may consist of ZAP members. This 64% is further distributed across the different ZAP grades according to the following rules:

- the total number of professor, full professor and extraordinary professor posts may not exceed 35% of the total number of positions within the academic staff;
- the number of full and extraordinary professor posts may not exceed 25 % of the total number of positions within the academic staff.

Table 2-2: Staff at universities (fte)

	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2004	2006
ZAP	2347	2332	2360	2508	2532	2516	2513
AAP	1687	1712	1755	1825	1808	1815	1817
ATP	3533	3623	3708	3716	3809	3894	3824

Note: ATP=non-academic staff

Source: Vlir

2.2.3 Post graduate-education

Post-academic education comprises:

- additional education (*aanvullende opleiding*): An addition to or broadening of one or more academic educations of the second cycle. This education leads after one year to the degree of '*Gediplomeerde in de aanvullende studies van...*' (*GAS*)
- special training (*specialisatie opleiding*): This kind of post-academic education aims to deepen or specialise in an area of the first or second cycle. This training leads after one or two years to the degree of '*Gediplomeerde in de gespecialiseerde studies van...*' (*GGS*)'
- doctorate education (*doctoraatsopleiding*): To obtain a doctoral (*Doctor*) degree, the candidate must prepare a dissertation or thesis under the direction of a supervisor. The thesis can be written in Dutch or in an international language, generally English or French.
- academic teacher education (*academische lerarenopleiding*): Leading to the degree of '*Geaggregeerde van het onderwijs*'.

First degree-holders may participate in these post-graduate programs. Individual universities can decide to impose an entrance examination as a prerequisite for admission to additional courses or to specialisation courses. Foreign applicants can be asked to take individual proficiency examinations. On average, actual total time to completion is five years, but teaching and other non- research activities are taken into account. The 'net' time to completion is about 4 years.

Since 1991 universities may include course-work as a compulsory element of the doctorate program. The course-work is equivalent to one year of study and may be spread over the whole period of the program. It is possible however, to obtain a *doktor*-degree without taking course-work. In that case, supervision will be in the hands of a *promotor* or, as is the case in some institutions, a supervising committee (*doctoraatscommissie*). In sciences, supervision usually is more intense than in humanities and social sciences, due to the fact that in sciences participants are part of a research team or are embedded in an already existing research program.

There are substantial differences in the status of the participants. Some are part of the assisting academic staff (AAP) and are paid by the university. In addition to their course-work and research, they have to spend part of their time teaching first and second cycle students. A second category of participants are those who have 4-year contracts financed by a research-council (FWO or IWT). The third category are those who are employed on the basis of research-contracts (financed by external sources) and must write theses in addition to carrying out their 'normal work'.

Universities have to reserve a number of positions (*mandaten*) for AAP. This number of positions is related to the total number of staff (described above), which is related to the number of subjects a programs the university is allowed to offer and the enrolment in these programs.

2.2.3.1 Access to post-academic or advanced academic degree courses

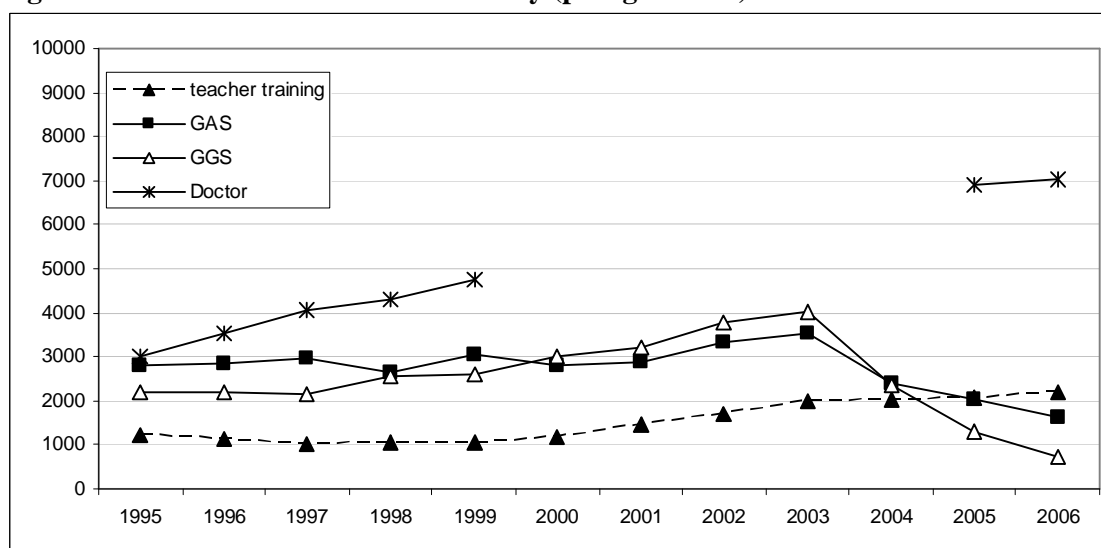
The following qualifications are required in order to begin additional courses and to specialisation courses:

- a final academic degree of the second cycle, e.g. licentiate engineer;
- a long-type higher education leaving certificate (final degree);
- a foreign qualification of higher education (minimum duration 3 years) recognised by the university authorities.

Individual universities can decide that passing an entrance examination is a prerequisite to admission for additional courses or to specialisation courses. Foreign applicants can be asked to take individual proficiency examinations.

2.2.3.2 Participation

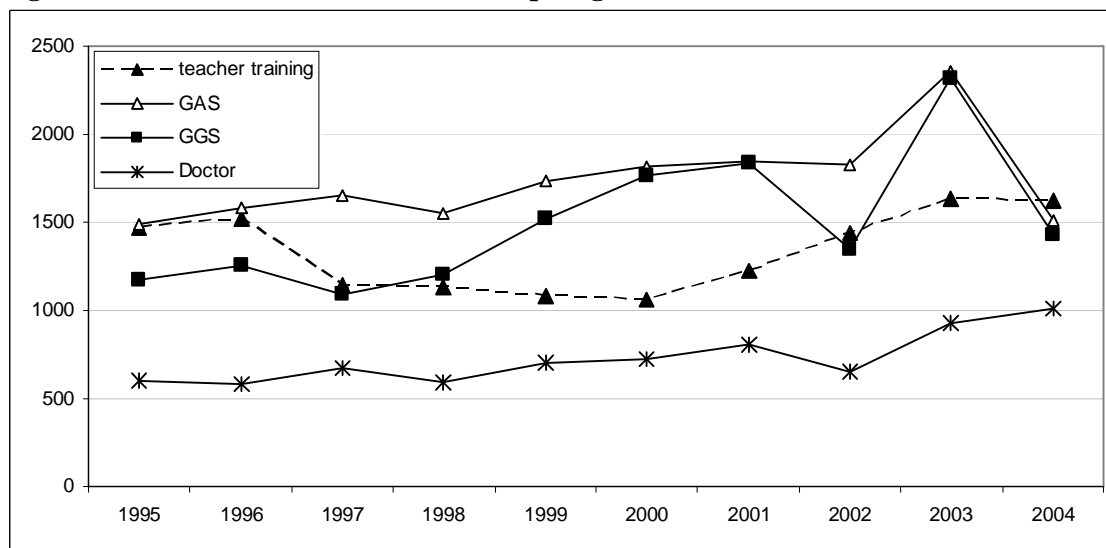
Figure 2-8: Students enrolled in university (post graduate)



Source: CHEPS IHEM 2007

Apart from the growth in students enrolled in doctoral training programmes and teacher training, it is interesting to see that enrolment in the other post graduate programmes has decreased sharply after 2003.

2.2.3.3 Outflow

Figure 2-9: Graduates from universities (post graduate)

Source: CHEPS IHEM 2007

3 Research infrastructure

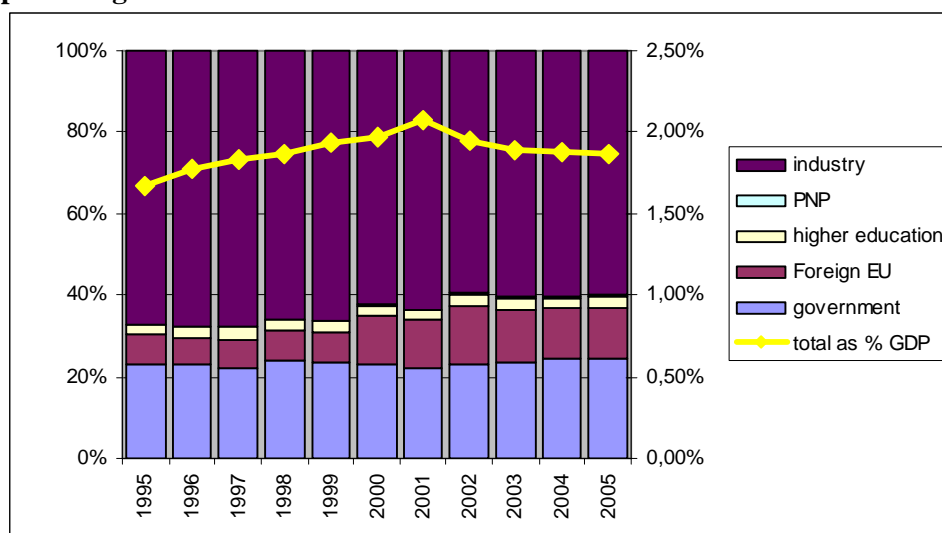
3.1 Providers

The main provider of financial resources for R&D in Belgium is industry: they provide more than 60% of the funds. Government is the second largest provider (around 25%), through general university funds and specific research funding. The third important provider are providers from abroad (including the EU).

Total expenditure on R&D has risen above 2% of GDP in 2001. However, after that year R&D expenditure has moved away from the Lisbon target of 3%.

It is furthermore interesting to see that the part of industry has decreased over the years and the part of foreign providers has grown.

Figure 3-1: Expenditure on R&D in Belgium, by source of funds and total as a percentage of GDP



http://www.belspo.be/belspo/stat/xls/O&OStatistieken_Internet_NL.xls

3.1.1 Research Councils

There are a number of governmental research councils that fund research

- *Fund for Scientific Research (FWO)*. The FWO was founded in 1928 as an Institution of Public Interest for the support of scientific research, at the initiative of King Albert 1. It has been supported by the national authorities in 1947, and is used for funding the universities. In its funding was mainly taken over by the Cultural Communities. In 1992 the Fund received federal structure and since then, the Flemish Board of Trustees had fully autonomous powers of decision. Since October 1996 the Flemish Board of Trustees uses the name of "*Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek - Vlaanderen*" (FWO) or

Fund for Scientific Research - Flanders (Belgium). The FWO is funded by the Flemish Community and the federal Government. The FWO encourages and finances fundamental scientific research in universities of the Flemish Community and in institutions for scientific research. The activities of the FWO aim to expand the frontiers of knowledge in all fields of science including humanities. The FWO endeavours to achieve its goals by:

Training researchers

- young university graduates can receive financial assistance for preparing a doctoral thesis with a Research Assistantship or a Special Doctoral Grant;
- Holders of Ph.D. can get an internationally recognised degree as Postdoctoral Fellows. They can also obtain a mobility allowance.

Supporting individual researchers or prominent research teams

- a salary is granted to scientists who have an international acknowledged degree
- operating and equipment credits are granted for personal research for young and/or established researchers
- operating, equipment and personnel credits are made available to teams of researchers for carrying out high-level scientific projects.

Promoting (national and international) scientific contacts and co-operation

- assistance is granted regarding establishing Scientific Research Networks for co-ordination, national and international co-operation concerning scientific research at the postdoctoral level.
- Funding is provided for visiting postdoctoral fellowships to sustain FWO research projects and scientific research networks.
- sabbatical leaves are granted
- a number of different grants are funded: for grants for study and training periods abroad, for active participation in international congresses abroad and for organising international congresses in Belgium;

Awarding scientific prizes.

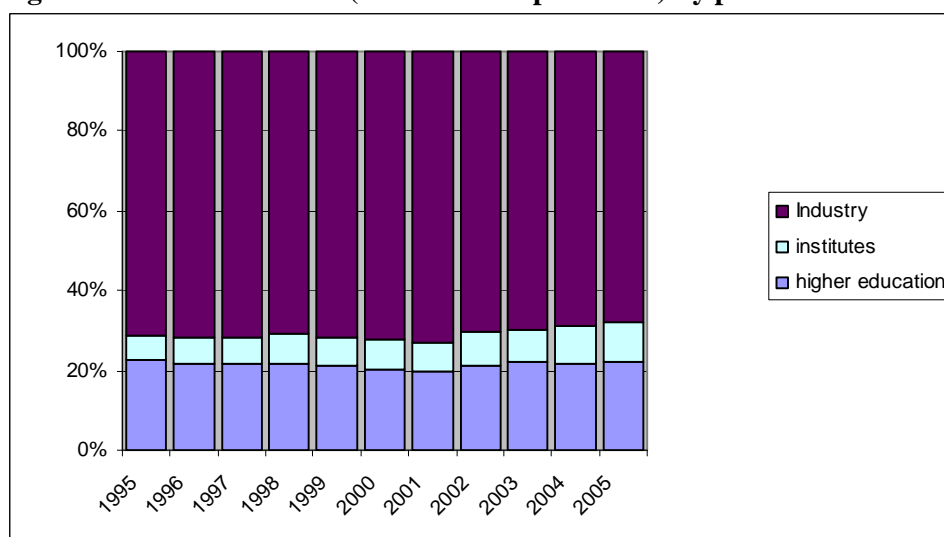
- *Nationaal Fonds voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek (NFWO)* (National Fund for Scientific Research). NFWO implements policy regarding fundamental research of universities within the guidelines of the Flemish ministry of Science and Technology and the ministry of Education. The NFWO is an intermediary organisation that divides the financial means between universities and research institutes. This happens according to strict criteria and evaluations.
- *Vlaams Instituut voor de bevordering van het Wetenschappelijk-Technologisch Onderzoek in de Industrie (IWT)* (Flemish institute for promotion of Scientific and Technological Research in Industry). IWT supports and stimulates industrial research and technology transfer in the Flemish industry. All companies established in the Flemish region, can request IWT assistance in their projects and have IWT services at their disposal. A professional, scientific staff evaluates each project and checks scientific value, technical feasibility a valorisation potential. IWT offers also post-graduate grants for research specialisation at the PhD level and post-doctoral fellowship in technology domains. The

awards usually have a duration of two years and are entirely financed by IWT. Promising projects are thus encouraged, and the transfer of research results to industry is stimulated.

3.2 Performers

Industry spends most of the R&D resources. The share of higher education institutions as performer of R&D activities has remained relatively stable, whereas the role of institutes, which was relatively small, has grown.

Figure 3-2: R&D activities (in terms of expenditure) by performer



http://www.belspo.be/belspo/stat/xls/O&Ostatistieken_Internet_NL.xls

3.2.1 Research Institutions¹¹

There are five research institutions that are linked to universities (VITO, IMEC, VIB, IBBT and ITG) and five scientific institutions which are independent from universities and which are funded by the government and business-enterprises (Center for Population and Family Studies, Institute for Nature Conservation, Institute for Forestry and Wild Conservation, Royal Museum for Arts, and the Institution for Archaeological Patrimony)

VITO (*Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek*) employs over 400 highly qualified scientists, engineers, technicians and administrative staff, making it the largest multi-disciplinary research centre in the Flanders region. VITO carries out market-oriented technological research and develops innovative products and processes in the fields of

¹¹ Source: <http://ewi-vlaanderen.be>

non-nuclear energy, environmental and biotechnologies and advanced materials. VITO furthermore offers specialist services in the form of technological consultancy, analyses, surveys and audits. These activities are performed on behalf of public and industrial clients, often in collaboration with academic research teams and other research institutes.

IMEC (Inter-university Micro-electronics Research and Development Center) is a large independent microelectronics research and development centre in Europe. It was founded by the Flemish Government in 1984, and is located in Leuven. It employs over 600 people, mostly scientists and engineers, and collaborates with a large number of leading-edge companies and R&D organisations worldwide. Quality assurance is a major requirement within the context of this collaboration. IMEC performs scientific research, which runs 5 to 10 years ahead of industrial needs, with a view to practical applications.

VIB (Vlaams Interuniversitair Instituut voor Biotechnologie) stimulates research and valorisation of research in the field of biotechnology.

IBBT (Interdisciplinaire Instituut voor Breedbandtechnologie) focuses on ICT technology in general and broadband technology specifically.

ITG (Prins Leopold Instituut voor Tropische Geneeskunde Antwerpen) is an inter-university, but autonomous institute for specialized training, research and service provision. It is supervised by a Board of Governors on which all concerned universities and authorities are represented.

Contract research involving both universities and private or governmental organisations are increasing. However, there are no data available on the numbers or percentage of contract research. The Flemish Ministry has recently started to monitor year reports of all the universities in order to make a database that gives an indication on the activities of contract research and an overview of the funding sources of contract research. The Decree of 22 February 1995, regarding the management of universities addresses the provision of contract research also addresses the participation of universities in spin-off businesses and non-profit companies. This participation should amount to added value for the universities, and must not damage the interests of the universities or put pressure on their financial position. The university can only make a financial contribution if the activities of the business are aimed at the valorisation of the knowledge developed by the university. There are compulsory overheads of at least 10% for all the activities of scientific services. The payment for the use of university facilities must at least cover the costs. The right to publish the results of research may be postponed for a reasonable period, and there must be an equitable distribution of the income resulting from the valorisation of research results (taking out patents, licenses, establishing intellectual rights). The decree also provides for the possibility of a personal payment for the members of staff who have performed the scientific services.

3.3 Research policy

3.3.1 Government

Scientific and educational policy making is devolved into the hands of the Communities. However, the Federal Authorities retain competence in areas of research, which are explicitly formulated as necessary for the performance of national tasks (i.e. aerospace cultural sciences, public services) and take initiatives in collaboration with the federate entities. National research responsibilities fall largely to the Federal Ministry for Science Policy, which also has a co-ordinating role, and sets guidelines and controls nuclear research matters. Under the Ministry's supervision, the Science Policy Office or SSTC (*Services Fédéraux des Affaires Scientifiques, Techniques et Culturelles*) undertakes many of these tasks (Richter 1996).

The Communities organise their own research and development policy. The division of authority concerning scientific research is not always clear. Because of the weak co-ordination between the policies of the various actors in the field of research an Inter-ministerial Conference for Research policy (ICWB) was founded. All the Ministers (from Central, Community and Regional level) in charge of research and policy are members of the ICWB. The task of the ICWB is to deliberate about actions concerning the authorities of the three policy institutions and/or the issues that go beyond the authorities of the Communities and the Regions. The ICWB has two administrative consultancy bodies: the Committee for Federal Co-operation and the Committee for International Co-operation. The committees are mainly engaged in policy preparations.

The Ministers of the Flemish government are responsible for the scientific research under their authority. The Minister of Economic Affairs, for example, is responsible for all science research related to industrial policy. The Prime Minister is responsible for science policy as well as general research policy.

Administratie Wetenschap en Innovatie (AWI)

This central administration regarding research policy was founded, *de Administratie Wetenschap en Innovatie (AWI)*, to support the Flemish Ministry of Science and Technology with the preparation and carry out policy. Their main activities are to prepare and implement policies through strategic planning, long-term budgeting, policy evaluation. Furthermore they do the internal co-ordination of the Ministry of Science and Technology and co-ordination with universities, funding institutes, research institutes and scientific institutes.

3.3.2 Advisory councils¹²

Flanders has three advisory councils, each focusing on different disciplines.

¹² Source: <http://ewi-vlaanderen.be>

Vlaamse raad voor Wetenschaps beleid

The Flemish Science Policy Council (VRWB) is the advisory body of the Government and the Parliament of Flanders for Science and Technology Policy. The VRWB is a forum where prominent actors from the academic and socio-economic worlds reflect as a kind of council of the wise, on the general lines of force of the science and technology policy to be implemented in Flanders. The legal basis of the VRWB is the decree of December 15, 1993. The VRWB is authorised to study, to formulate recommendations and to give advice on any matter relating to science and technology policy, either on its own initiative or following a request. The request can come from the Flemish Government, any member of this Government, or from the Flemish Parliament.

The Council consists of 6 representatives from universities, 6 representatives from employers and employees associations and 5 external members, chosen for their expertise regarding scientific research.

VIWTA (Vlaams Instituut voor Wetenschappelijk en Technologisch Aspectenonderzoek).

The Flemish institute for Scientific and Technological Research is an independent and autonomous institute, associated with the Flemish Parliament. The main role of the VIWTA is to advise the Flemish Parliament, either on its own initiative or in response to a question of the Members of the Flemish Parliament. The director of the VIWTA has the right to be heard in the Flemish Parliament and can ask the parliamentary staff for any document he considers relevant to its research.

Social Economic Council Flanders (Sociaal Economische Raad Vlaanderen – SERV)

The SERV is the council of the Flemish social partners. Ten representatives of both industry and labour have a seat on the council. SERV makes recommendations regarding policies etc.

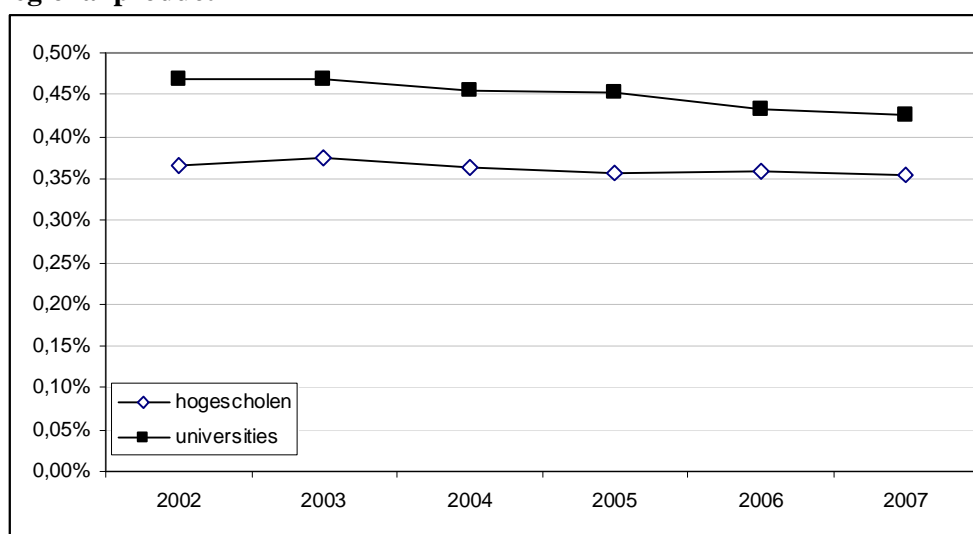
4 Financial aspects¹³

In this chapter an overview of institutional finance and funding arrangements is given, followed by a description of the student support system and the issue of tuition fees. First an insight is given in the total public budget for higher education.

4.1 Public expenditure

Public expenditure on higher education shows a slow yet steady decline. The *hogescholen* are less affected by that decline as the universities are.

Figure 4-1: Budget for higher education institutions as a percentage of the gross regional product



Source: (Vlaamse Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming 2007)

4.2 Institutional finance and funding formula's

4.2.1 Funding mechanisms for universities; the old system

Until 2000 universities the core funding (first flow) consisted of three parts: funds for (1) teaching and teaching-related research, (2) investments and (3) social facilities.

¹³ This chapter is partly based on ' Voorontwerp van decreet betreffende de financiering van de werking van de *hogescholen* en de universiteiten in Vlaanderen', Vlaamse Regering 2007

Teaching and teaching-related research

The first flow of funds for universities (*eerstegeldstroombekostiging*) contained a part, which as specifically meant to cover the costs of teaching and teaching related research (known as 'the working payment to the universities'). This part was provided to the institutions as a lump sum (*werkingsuitkering*). These working payments to the universities consisted of three parts:

- a part for academic courses, doctoral programmes (*doctoraatsopleidingen*) and teacher training courses, based on a funding formula;
- a part for continuing studies (*Voortgezette Opleidingen*);
- a part for General Practitioner programmes (known as the GAS and GSS programmes).

Investments

The 1991 Decree also stated that universities had to present an investment plan for five years, which had to be updated annually if necessary. The Flemish government funded the investments concerning the purchase, furnishing or expansion, renovation and maintenance of the estate for teaching, research and administrative activities, and the capital costs going along with it.

The formula underlying the calculation of the investment funding consisted of a fixed and a flexible part. In contrast to the basic budget of the universities, the subsidy for investments was earmarked and could not be used as a kind of a lump sum.

Social facilities

The allocation of funds concerning the social facilities for students, e.g. student restaurants, housing, etc., as well as maintenance were funded apart from the basic grants and investment funds. The social facilities were also funded according to a funding formula, which included a fixed amount (the social facilities grant of 1994) and a flexible part that depends on the indexed growth in the number of fundable students. The compensation for social facilities was earmarked.

In addition to these first-flow funds, universities could also obtain public funds from the second-flow of funding, which is distributed by the national research federations (NFWO, IWT).

In 2000 the funding mechanism for universities was changed. The working payment of universities (for covering the costs of teaching and teaching related research) was raised and was no longer related to the number of students. In the period 2001-2004 the working payment was adapted every year on the basis of the index of labour costs and consumer prices.

The reform of the funding mechanism was a transitional arrangement. In the period 2001-2004 an examination of alternative funding mechanism (in relation to a rationalisation of the university course supply) was to lead to an outline of a new funding system. The main touchstone of the new system had to be 'quality'.

4.2.2 Funding mechanism for hogescholen; the old system

The decree of 13 July 1994 set up a funding mechanism for the *hogescholen* that closely resembled the (former) arrangement of the universities. The *hogescholen* received payments to cover their personnel and operating costs. Each *hogeschool* received a lump-sum (or 'envelope'). The decree specified the overall sum for all *hogescholen* (art. 178). This sum is subsequently index-linked to the rise in unit labour costs and consumer prices. Before funds were distributed between the *hogescholen*, a number of deductions were made to cover certain costs which the government paid directly, such as salary costs for certain members of staff (art. 179 of the Decree 1994). After these deductions were made, an overall sum was left for operational payments to the *hogescholen*. The sum per *hogeschool* was determined on the basis of the following criteria:

- a historically fixed sum (art. 194)
- a variable part based on finance-eligible units: a combination of student numbers (five-year average) and the weightings allocated to the courses (art. 195).

The period 1996-2000 was a transition period for the calculation of operating payment, in which particular account was taken of the current situation of the *hogescholen*. Each *hogeschool* received 100% of its 1995 cost price in 1996 (historical fixed sum). From 1997 onwards, student numbers (period 1991-1995) and finance-eligible units (in the three previous years) also played a role. The historical fixed sum (based on the cost in 1995) has been reduced from 100 % to 20 % between 96 and 2000 years. In the year 2000, 64 % has been distributed on the basis of finance-eligible units and 16% on the basis of student numbers (1991-1995).

4.2.3 New law on Funding

In 2005, the Ministry of Education announced a new law on the funding of higher education, which should have been up and running by January 2007. During 2006, three discussion papers concerning the introduction of the new funding scheme were issued. The higher education institutions, however, requested to postpone the introduction of the new system because they were concerned that they lacked time to fully grasp the extent of the changes and make the necessary adjustments. Therefore, the introduction of this new law on funding has been postponed until January 2008. In this law, funding consists of four parts: a fixed element, incentive funds for specific policy priorities, a teaching related variable part, and a research related variable part (Kaiser, Beverwijk et al. 2006; Kaiser, Beverwijk et al. 2007)..

Teaching activities

The new funding law provides 100 million euros for teaching in *hogescholen* and universities. The fixed part will be determined based on the number of study credits issued by the higher education institution in the academic years $t-7/t-6$ up to $t-3/t-2$.

The variable part of funding for teaching in *hogescholen* and universities is computed differently for each type of higher education institution.

The variable part of the funding of teaching in *hogescholen* depends on the balance between programmes aimed at professional education and programmes with an academic nature, and related to the number of study credits issued in each of these strands of programmes. Since universities only offer academic bachelors and masters, the variable part of funding is based on the credits issued for each programme, divided by the number of universities.

Research activities

In the new law on funding, research funding for universities consists of a fixed part and a variable part. In order to get the fixed part, universities must meet two conditions:

- a. The university has issued at least 50 doctoral degrees between t-6/t-5 and t-3/t-2; and
- b. The number of publications in the years t-12 up to t-3 amounts to at least 1000.

The variable part each institution receives is calculated based on the following four elements¹⁴:

- a. The relative contribution of each of the *hogescholen* and universities in terms of the number of bachelor and master degrees issued in the years t-6/t-5 up to t-3/t-2
- b. The relative contribution of each university in the number of doctoral degrees issued in the years t-6/t-5 up to t-3/t-2
- c. The relative contribution of each university in the number of publications and citations in the years t-12 up to t-3
- d. The degree to which each university hired specific groups of academic staff:
 - PhD holders that received their doctoral degree at a university different from the one where they were hired
 - PhD holders that received their degree from the hiring university, but who were not part of the academic staff during at least 3 out of the last 5 years.
 - Female academic staff

4.3 Additional funding research activities

In Flanders, publicly financed basic research is solely carried out within the university sector. According to the Decree on the *hogescholen* 1994, the *hogescholen* may carry out applied research, preferably in co-operation with a national or international university or third parties.

Basic research funding in universities comes from two sources. The first way is through the basic funding model described above.

The second way of funding basic research at universities is through the “second flow of funds”. The second flow of funds consists of direct (institution related) and indirect (through research councils) funding. Since 2000 the direct second flow of funds is distributed among the universities on the basis of output criteria: the number of second cycle diplomas (*licentiaat*) of the recognised courses awarded, the number of doctorates degrees awarded and the percentage of the working payment each universities has received.

¹⁴ The University of Brussels is exempted from these conditions

The indirect second flow of funds is distributed by the national research councils (IWT, FWO). Allocation of these funds is based on competition between the institutions, where experts evaluate the research proposals.

In addition to these public funds, the federal government also allocates second flow funds through the federal Action Programme (*Interuniversitaire Attractiepolen*, IUAP). The IUAP aims to create nation-wide networks of researchers to create 'mass and focus' and strengthen the international position of Belgium¹⁵. This funding makes up 10% of the total second flow funds.

In 2000 the Flemish government also decided that post doc researchers affiliated to FWO with a permanent appointment will be appointed as members of the independent academic staff (ZAP) of universities. This decision also implied a redistribution of funds from the indirect second flow to the direct second flow.

4.4 Student support and fees

4.4.1 Student Support¹⁶

Each year, the Flemish community gives financial support to pupils and students who come from financially deprived families. The study grants (for secondary education) and study financing (for higher education) aim at promoting the democratisation of education. They are intended to ensure that all young people are given full opportunities in the field of training and intellectual development, regardless of their origin, financial possibilities or social and cultural environment.

In 2007, the Education Department received around 50.000 applications for support for study in higher education. The annual financial resources given by the government to support students amounted to some 57 million euros.

Depending on family income and the number of persons in the family who live on the income, financial support varies from the minimum allowance (around 201 euros) to the maximum study financing of around 3121 euros for student living in digs, and 1787 for students living at home.

In 2006, regulations in higher education were changed thoroughly by the higher education reform act. Nevertheless, there are three pillars on both legislative systems: the condition of nationality, the educational conditions, and the financial conditions.

- The nationality condition requires that study grants and study financing are awarded to all students of Belgian nationality. Foreign students living in Belgium, can also apply but they have to stay for a lengthy period in Belgium.

¹⁵ Source: <http://ewi-vlaanderen.be>

¹⁶ Mainly based on *Ministry of the Flemish Community (2005). Education in Flanders. E. Department, Ministry of the Flemish Community: 51.*

- Everyone who qualifies for study financing can be supported financially for two bachelors, a master, a preparation programme, a bridging programme and a teacher training as further education. As study paths in higher education have become more flexible, also study financing has become more flexible. A system of study credits has replaced the study year system. The study financing amount is linked to the number of study credits for which the student is enrolled. The act continues to stimulate study progress, e.g. by making students enrol for a minimum of study credits in a course that leads to a diploma. If the student does not pass the exams or engages in another course, he/she will not get an 'ordinary' study financing allowance any longer. In that case, the student can still apply for a 'joker' allowance scheme. Finally, the new higher education act extends the possibilities of taking study financing along the Higher Education Space. In the past, funding could only be taken along if students opted for foreign studies that were not provided in Flanders. This is no longer the case, except for students who want to study outside the European Higher Education Area.
- Financial conditions define that the income is the basis for giving a study grant or study financing. If the income exceeds a certain maximum income, the student can no longer apply. The basis for defining this income, still is tax law.

In addition to the funds universities and *hogescholen* receive under the funding law, they will receive additional funds when they offer their students facilities like housing, meals and student jobs, and promote the use of bicycle or public transport. These service-related subsidies are for universities higher than for *hogescholen*. During 2006, the Ministry developed a new scheme for this subsidy which does not discriminate between universities and *hogescholen*. As from the first of January 2007, there is 3.6 million euros available for *hogescholen* to further develop their service related activities.

4.4.2 Tuition fees

Students have to pay tuition. The amount depends on the institution and type of program they attend. Amounts vary only slightly between institutions and are annually raised by the inflation rate. On average full-time students, who do not receive a study grant, have to pay €445 for university programs in the Dutch-speaking Community, student who receive a study grant pay €80. For the non-university programs students have to pay between least €73 and €445.

Tuition fees do not include the examination fees. For university and non-university exams, institutions may charge at most €50. In addition to the tuition fees, near-grant-recipients have to pay €37. and students receiving a grant pay €25 as examination fee.

Foreign students (who are in one of the categories below) pay the same tuition fees as Belgian students.

- Students of foreign nationality whose parents (or legal guardian) have permanent or temporary residence in Belgium and work there (or did so in the past);
- Students who are citizens of an EU Member State;

- Students of foreign nationality who are resident in Belgium and who have refugee status accorded to them by the Belgian delegation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;
- Students from a developing country that is recognised as such by Belgium and who have been granted admission to university studies in Belgium by the minister responsible for co-operation with developing countries;
- Students of a country which has concluded a cultural agreement with Belgium and who have received a scholarship within the framework of such an agreement from the Ministers responsible for international cultural relations.

5 Governance structures

5.1 Introduction

Since 1989, the federal government has the power to determine the (beginning and end of the) age of compulsory education, the minimum conditions for obtaining a diploma, and teachers' pensions. These tasks are carried out by the federal Services for Scientific, Technical, and Cultural Matters which fall under the Services of the Prime Minister of Belgium. All the other educational matters in Flanders fall under the authority of the Parliament of Flanders (the legislative authority), the government of Flanders, and the Flemish Minister of Education (executive authority).

5.2 Community governance¹⁷

The Minister of Education is the head of the Education Department of the ministry of the Flemish Community that is responsible for all the aspects of education policy, from nursery to university education. There are two departments other than the Education Department, with powers regarding special aspects of education, mainly continuing education. Agricultural training and commercial courses of the Flemish Institute for Entrepreneurship Training (VIZO) and the Vocational Training Agency (VDAB) fall under the competence of the Departments of Economic Affairs, Employment, Internal Affairs and Agriculture. The Flemish Community opted in the degrees of 12 June (for universities) and 13 July 1994 (for *hogescholen*) for deregulation through a fundamental transfer of responsibility to individual education institutions. With this legislation, the government abandoned central regulation (which had grown up historically) and began to define tasks and responsibilities through framework decrees. The 5th state reform (the so-called Lambermontagreements) (2001) allocated more financial means and power to the federal states. The federal states obtained fiscal autonomy and almost total control over different kinds of taxes, such as traffic, registration and succession taxes. The federal states also obtained control over agriculture, foreign trade and development and authority over the provinces, municipalities and social service departments. The institutions of the Brussels-Capital Region were once again reformed. It now provides the necessary financial resources and holds the institutions accountable for their use within certain minimum limits. In principle, control is exercised indirectly. In addition the government has also established a quality assurance system, but has made the institutions themselves primarily responsible for its application. A choice has thus been made for greater local autonomy, which entails a certain amount of deregulation. On the other hand, the government has imposed rules on higher education to hold back uncontrolled expansion, and hence to guarantee a minimum level of quality. The range of subjects offered by each university is established by decree. The government establishes the academic courses within each study field and specifies the name of the associated academic degree.

¹⁷ Source: www.eurydice.org

5.2.1 *Developments*¹⁸

The duration of masters (Vandenbroucke 2006)

In 2006, the Flemish government has created the possibility to organize master courses of 120 ECTS. This increase in study duration was linked to the condition to integrate certain components (e.g. teaching credentials) into the programme. Additionally, the institutions needed to display that they possess both the teaching- and research capacity to expand their master courses. Up to this date, most request for expansion have been approved. For the remaining request, a decision will be made before the end of 2007.

Increasing research in colleges of higher education

The Flemish policy aims to restructure the current two-cycle education in colleges of higher education to academic bachelors and masters. This requires strengthening the research capacity within these non-university higher education institutions. The current policy aims to invest by 2009 approximately 30 million euros in the strengthening of this research capacity

Quality assurance and ranking

With the quality assurance structures now in place, policies mainly aim to stimulate students to base their choice for a college of higher education or a university on the quality of the programmes accredited. In close cooperation with the Netherlands, a pilot ranking project has been started based on the CHE-ranking (Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung).

New law on funding¹⁹

In 2005 the Ministry of Education announced a new law on the funding of higher education, which should have been up and running by January 2007. However, at the request of the higher education institutions, the introduction of the new law was postponed until January 2008.

5.3 Intermediary organisations

5.3.1 *VLOR (Vlaamse Onderwijsraad)*

The Government of Flanders in 1990 established the Flemish Education Council (VLOR). It is the advisory and discussion organ for all educational matters concerning all levels of the system in Flanders. All the draft decrees related to education must be submitted to this council. The VLOR can also advise the Government of Flanders on its own initiative. The VLOR is comprised of a general council and a number of individual councils. The general council is composed of representatives of the managers of institutions, the teaching staff, the parent association, the social and economic organisations, and education experts. The individual councils are:

¹⁸ This section is mainly based on Vandenbroucke, F. (2006). Voortbouwen en vooruitzien. M. o. t. F. Community.

¹⁹ For more detailed information on the new law see Ch.4

- the council for elementary education with a department for special education;
- the council for secondary education, with departments for general secondary education, artistic secondary education, technical and vocational secondary education, and special secondary education;
- the council for higher education, with departments for higher education of one cycle, higher education of two cycles, and university education;
- the council for adult education, with a department for social advancement education.

VLOR has two so-called 'participation boards', one for subsidised official education and one for subsidised private education. The participation boards must establish infringements of the Decree governing these councils. In addition to an advisory and consultation function, the VLOR has a research function. The council can take its own initiative to carry out research or contract it out to third parties.

At request of the minister of education the Flemish Education Council (VLOR) co-ordinates the definition of 'professional profiles' and accompanying 'educational profiles' which should form the foundation for the curricula of the *hogescholen*. The definition of these profiles is decided in consultation with representatives of socio-economic organisations (The Social-Economic Council of Flanders). A similar procedure for universities is considered unnecessary.

5.3.2 VLHORA²⁰

The Flemish Higher Education Institutes Council (VLHORA) was established in 1996. The council advises on all kinds of matters regarding education, research and service provision of the colleges of higher education.

5.3.3 VLIR

The Flemish Inter-university Council (VLIR) is an umbrella organisation for the Flemish universities and functions as a debating and policy-making forum. It also provides policy advice on University matters to the Flemish parliament and lobbies policy-makers on behalf of the universities. VLIR gathers information on all aspects of university operation, enabling it to provide important policy information. The VLIR conducts its own research or contracts out research.

5.3.4 SERV

The Social-Economic Council of Flanders (SERV), which is comprised of representatives of employers and employees, should advise on all draft decrees (including those relating to education).

²⁰ Source: www.vlhora.be

5.4 Institutional Governance²¹

5.4.1 Non-university sector²²

The administrative boards of the Flemish Autonomous university colleges are Board of Directors, the directorate, the General manager, the department boards, the heads of departments and the other organs as determined by the governing board.

The **Board of Directors** (Raad van Bestuur), consists of

- 8 representatives of the different categories of the personnel elected for 4 years by the personnel,
- 3 representatives of the students, elected for 2 years by the students,
- a maximum of 12 representatives of the socio-economic and cultural sectors (also for a term of 4 years).

The **General Manager** (Algemeen directeur), has an advisory voice in this council.

The Board of Directors determines the regulations concerning administration, examinations, and discipline, establishes the budget, appoints the personnel, establishes the framework for the organisation and co-ordination of the tasks of the educational institution and so on.

The **Directorate** (Bestuurscollege) consists of the chairman of the Board of Directors, the General Manager (Algemeen Directeur), and 3 representatives of the personnel appointed for 4 years by the Board of Directors. The Directorate (Bestuurscollege) is responsible for the daily administration and the preparation, announcement, and execution of the decisions of the Board of Directors, the financial management within the framework established by the Board of Directors, the appointment of non-executive administrative and technical personnel, and many other matters that are not explicitly assigned by law to other administrative organs or offices (Decree of 13 July 1994).

The **General Manager** is appointed (and may be dismissed) by the Board of Directors and is responsible for the administration of the institute. He directs the administrative and other (e.g. international relations officer) staff. He is responsible for the registration of students, their administrative records, as well as the records of each member of his staff. By delegation, he shares responsibility for decisions on the use of funds. Regularly, at least once a year, he informs the governing body of the school's financial situation and proposes for the budget for the coming year. He is also responsible for the school's material situation, for maintenance and repairs, and for the purchase of furnishings and equipment. He plays a central role in selecting new teachers and other staff members to be appointed by the governing body. He is responsible for all external contacts (with the pedagogical counseling services, the local community, guidance centre, labour market, etc.) and the public relations

²¹ Mainly based on **Ministry of the Flemish Community (2005). Education in Flanders. E. Department, Ministry of the Flemish Community: 51.**

²² Source: www.eurydice.org

of the school in general. The institutes have to organise their own recruitment procedures for the office of General Manager. The position may be filled by a member of the regular teaching staff with a permanent appointment. Appointment conditions are similar to those of the teaching staff.

In subsidized university colleges the **university college board** consists of members co-opted by the board itself. Per department a head of department, who is responsible for day-to-day management, is appointed. It also establishes an Academic Council, which is to be informed by the board with regard to all matters concerning the educational institution.

The **Academic Council** consists of elected representatives of the board of directors of the college (3/8) (4 years), of the personnel ((3/8) 4 years), and of the students (2/8) (2 years). This council is entitled to receive information and to advise (it issues an advice when asked to do so by the board of directors of the college or on its own initiative) for at least the educational aspects concerning certain matters (such as the research policy). Third, the Academic Council has the 'competence of consultation' (the taking of a decision on its own initiative or when asked by the board of directors of the college that, when consensus is reached, will be carried out by the board of directors of the college) for at least the educational aspects of certain matters such as the financial policy, the policy concerning education and examinations, and organisation of study guidance. If there is no consensus, the board of directors of the college will make the decision.

The Decree of 13 July 1994 also created a council of students. Yet, henceforth, student participation for higher education (university colleges, universities, associations) is regulated by the so-called Participation Decree of 19 March 2004, which also regulates the legal position of the student.

Concerning the conditions of employment, each college of higher education and each department of that institute has a negotiation committee (*onderhandelingscomité*) to regulate the relations between the employer and the unions of the personnel (see also next section). The Negotiation Committee of the College (*Hogeschoolonderhandelingscomité*) (HOC) consists of the representatives of the Board of Directors (*Raad van Bestuur*) and of the personnel at a funded college of higher education. At subsidized university colleges, this council is composed of the representatives of the board of directors of the college and those of the personnel (Decree of 13 July 1994).

5.4.2 Universities²³

The governing body approves the mission of the university and establishes the organic regulations of the university, both upon the advice of the Academic Council (*Academische Raad*) and the Executive Board. The governing body is also held responsible for major policy options (e.g. participation in other legal individualities, such as among others the association). The governing body appoints and dismisses the rector, the general administrator

²³ Source: www.eurydice.org

(*algemeen beheerder*) as well as the members of the Executive Board and of the general bureau of the Executive Board and the Academic Council.

The Board of Directors (*Raad van Beheer*) administers the university and represents the university outside the university institution. This council prepares the budget and the accounts and issues the structural regulations and the regulations concerning personnel and students upon the advice of the Academic Council. It is responsible for the financial management of the university and the personnel policy (appointments, recruitment etc.) and supervises over the fulfillment of the mission the university. This council consists of the Rector, the General Administrator, the members of the General Bureau (*Gemeenschappelijk Bureau*) and other members, who are appointed for terms of 5 years.

The Academic Council determines and co-ordinates the policy on education, scientific research, and scientific services. It also organises the election of the rector and appoints the members of the General Bureau. The Academic Council advises the Board of Directors on its own initiative or when requested on matters for which the Board of Directors is competent, e.g. personnel policy, financial management, and regulations. In addition to the Rector, the General Administrator, and the members of the General Bureau, the deans of the Faculties are also members of the Academic Council. This council also includes the representatives of the self-employed academic personnel, assisting academic personnel, administrative and technical personnel and the students.

The General Bureau consists of the Rector, the General Administrator, and other members. This organ is responsible for the daily administration of the university and prepares the meetings of the Academic Council and the Board of Directors, submits proposals, and is responsible for the execution of their decisions.

5.4.3 Participation of students and staff

Hogescholen are free to structure their own programs. The specific details of curriculum formulation vary from one institution to another. Broadly speaking, the overall program of a field of study or course is drafted by course committees (at course, faculty, department and/or subject-group level) and the course teachers then largely determine the content of each subject. The course committees determine whether or not this content meets the established objectives.

In higher education, the local participation structures are as follows. Members and staff are represented in all administrative bodies and co-management bodies of Flemish *hogescholen* and universities. The students with a right to vote on the board are elected via direct or stepped elections. If there are no voting students on the board, the board discusses at least once a year the general organization and working with the student council.

In addition, there are specific participation bodies:

- Students at *hogescholen* and universities have an own elected student council. This council operates at the level of the institution or association. The student council has an advisory

right, can decide with the board and can be consulted by the board. The student council is authorized to establish participation committees at the level of the sections of the *hogescholen* or university.

- In *hogescholen* there are a college negotiation committee and a departmental negotiation committee in which representatives of the management of the college and representatives of staff have a seat.
- In universities, the consultation with the staff members and trade unions is done according to the rules of the legal position of the university.

The act of 19 March 2004 on the legal position of the student, participation in higher education, the integration of some sections of continuing higher education in *hogescholen* and the monitoring of the higher education reform in Flanders has strengthened and specified the participation of students.

Government commissioners in *hogescholen* and universities assess student participation every five years on the grounds of the findings of the umbrella student association. The assessment report is presented to the Flemish Government.

6 Quality assurance²⁴

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Universities

In 1991 universities in Flanders implemented a system of internal and external quality assurance in return for more autonomy. The government has given the institutions full responsibility and ownership of the system for quality assurance. Like university colleges universities take care of the internal and external quality assurance of their educational and research activities. They permanently and at their own initiative monitor the quality of their educational activities. The decree concerning universities advocates the involvement of the students, the graduates and external professional experts in these processes of internal quality assurance. The Decree on universities of 1991 states it as follows.

*Chapter VI Management of Quality
Article 122*

The university sees to external and internal management of quality:

- 1. it must monitor its education and research activity quality continuously and on its own initiative;*
- 2. as much as possible, it provides assessment at regular intervals-at least once every eight years-and in co-operation with other universities from at home and abroad as much as possible of the education and research activities' quality of the university; a public report is written about these assessment results;*
- 3. it shall implement the quality assessment outcome in the university policy.*

By way of transition, the first round for internal and external management of quality may last no more than ten years.

Article 123

The authorities monitor the management of quality and supervise management of quality by universities in the following way:

- 1. at regular intervals, the Government of Flanders examines the operation of external and internal management of quality by the universities;*
- 2. without prejudice to the ideological, scientific and instructional freedom, the Government of Flanders has a comparative examination conducted into the quality of education activities in the training programs or groups thereof it indicates and of the research activities in the fields it indicates. For that purpose,*

²⁴ Source: www.eurydice.org

it appoints a committee of independent specialists; this committee writes a public report about their examination results that shall be sent-for their information-to the Flemish Inter-University Council, to the Flemish Education Council and to the Parliament of Flanders;

A central aspect in the quality assurance of higher education are the so-called **external reviews** (*visitaties*) coordinated by the Flemish Interuniversity Council (Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad) (VLIR). The system of external reviews (*visitatiestelsel*) consists of three phases. In a first phase the focus is on the internal evaluation, a critical self-analysis by the persons involved concerning the courses to be reviewed. The results of this self-analysis, which takes about one year and in which academic, administrative and technical staff, students, graduates and representatives of the professions are involved, are assembled in an extensive report, the self-evaluation report.

Self-evaluation, which is viewed as a form of monitoring within the overall system of internal quality assurance, should be carried out with a frequency set by the university board taking into account factors such as the length of the course and the frequency of external quality assurance. This entails the amendment of the decree.

6.1.2 Hogescholen

In Flanders, each college of higher education is expected to permanently assess the quality of the teaching and the research of the college, and the actions for improvement should be stated in the annual report of the *Hogeschool*. Students should be actively involved in this process. As far as possible it should also incorporate into the self-evaluation process the views of graduates and people from the professional field to which the course is linked. Self-evaluation is to result in a report, the status and distribution of which is determined by the college board. At present, most colleges implement the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) system, although different applications are used.

A study by the Flemish council for hogescholen (Vlaamse Hogescholenraad; VLHORA), "Optimisation of the university colleges" (2000) shows that most *hogescholen* choose a system of Integral Quality Assurance (Integrale Kwaliteitszorg, IKZ)). This means that not only education and scientific research but also the systematic control and continuous improvement of the working of the hogeschool in total are covered by the quality assurance programme. Consequently, Integral Quality Assurance (IKZ)) concerns all aspects of the organisation of the hogeschool and becomes a matter for all sections (Rottiers, 2001; Bronders, 2001).

For the *hogescholen*, practically the same regulations exist (Decree of 1994), except that the cycle of evaluation is five years (opposed to eight for the universities). Additional to the university regulations, in article 58, 2o, it is stated that the college should specify how students evaluate the teaching staff within the quality management framework.

University colleges and universities implement a regular external assessment of the quality of their educational activities themselves. This can be done per course or per group of courses. The external evaluation is carried out at least every eight years for the bachelor and masters courses (decree concerning the restructuring of higher education in Flanders (B.S. 18.08.2003).

In those institutions for higher education where the internal quality assurance comes under the autonomy of the institutions themselves, the VLHORA and the VLIR were held responsible for the organisation and coordination of the external quality assurance, the so-called external reviews of courses. The coordination refers in any case to the development and the definition of a protocol of quality assurance that the review commissions (visitatiecommissies) use when assessing the quality. The review commissions carry out the external evaluation of a course or group of courses. All institutions which offer a course or a group of courses to be evaluated, are involved in the review. The review is carried out by a commission of external experts. The inspection procedure is as follows.

- 1 The review commission starts from the self-evaluation report drawn up by the institutions.
- 2 The review commission visits the institution involved. On the basis of the review the commission reaches a consensus on the strong points and the recommendations for improvement. The visiting phase is finalized with an oral report of the most important findings for the persons responsible for the policy of the educational institution involved. The review is aimed at the process of quality improvement.
- 3 The review commissions draw up a public report based on the findings of their evaluation.

3.1 Developments²⁵

In view of the Bologna Process it was determined to implement accreditation as final piece of the existing quality assurance system. Accreditation is to lead to an automatic recognition of the obtained Flemish degree in the rest of Europe. The term 'accreditation' refers to the granting of a 'quality label' (keurmerk) which states that certain qualitative standards have been met. In Flanders accreditation is a prerequisite for government funding of a bachelor or masters course and for the right to issue recognized diplomas. The institution for higher education has to take the initiative to request accreditation. The (preliminary) accreditation framework defines that for the benefit of the accreditation a course has to be evaluated on the basis of six criteria: objectives of the course, programme, the staff's performance, provisions, internal quality assurance and results.

To this purpose a common Dutch-Flemish accreditation organization (NVAO) has been established as a joint effort by the Netherlands and Flanders. The evaluation of the programme by the external review commission, thus the external review report, forms the basis for the NVAO to come to an accreditation decision. This decision is positive or negative. To come to a decision, the NVAO checks if the programme concerned has enough basic quality. To this purpose the NVAO has worked out an accreditation frame. With a positive accreditation decision the programme is accredited for a period of eight academic years. With a negative accreditation decision the institution can appeal to the Flemish government or submit a request

²⁵ Source: www.eurydice.org

for a temporary recognition. Such a temporary recognition is valid for the period of one academic year and can be extended twice.

3.1.1 Sanctions

For both universities and *hogescholen*, the Decrees threaten to withdraw funding from a program of study if its quality is insufficient. The relevant article for universities is given below (art. 60 in the Decree on colleges for higher education is practically identical).

Article 124

When the education quality in a certain training program ... reveals to be insufficient in the long run and/or is reasonably considered not to belong to higher academic education, after a thorough quality examination, the Government of Flanders may decide that the students of a certain training program no longer qualify for the calculations ... of the education tax for a certain university. This exclusion order can be decided upon only if the Government of Flanders has issued a warning for the university involved. This warning implies that the Government of Flanders intends to decide upon this exclusion order and that it indicates the period of time within which the university must act upon the warning involved and within which deliberation concerning this problem can take place, if desired. ...

No concrete procedures for the exclusion from funding have been laid down so far, and no exclusion measures have yet been taken.

Visiting committees at universities monitor the quality of the reports. The government does not intervene in this, since the reviews are considered to be peer reviews. Each visiting committee itself decides on the procedures to be used in writing the review report. In practice, the editors tend to use the reports of the Association of Universities from the Netherlands as a guideline, which yields a certain uniformity in concept.

The measures taken to guarantee the quality of the reports of visiting committees for *hogescholen* include:

- *The composition of the review team.* The review is carried out by a team, generally consisting of an inspector of higher education, a member of the Education Development Service, an official of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Administration, and at least one independent Belgian or foreign expert on professional training and practice in the relevant field. The inspectorate of higher education composes the review team and the procedure it follows autonomously. The inspector acts as chair of the team and as the editor of the report. The same inspector chairs each team that reviews a given type of course in the *hogescholen*. This increases the chance of equal treatment and equal judgement. Simultaneously, the inspector gathers valuable expertise in the domain under review, so that he can inform and advise the minister better.
- *The manner in which the different agents involved are ensured to be heard*, e.g. through the questionnaires that assess the views of the school board, teachers, students and graduates, and through the discussions with these and other agents during the site visit.

- *The procedure for reporting and follow-up.* Within two weeks after the site visit, team members communicate their findings to the chair of the review team, dealing with the different topics, according to an a priori fixed scheme. The chair, in consultation with the team members, integrates these findings into a first draft report. The head of the department that was visited is given a chance to comment on this document. If the college of higher education reacts, but the review team does not agree with the comments, the head of the department is invited by the inspector general for a meeting with the members of the review team. After this meeting, the review team, chaired by the Inspector General of Higher Education, decides upon the content of the final report. Basically, these reports are meant for internal use. If the college of higher education wants to use a report for external use, it has to publish the entire report.

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