

INTRODUCTION

Vesalius College

Vesalius College was established in 1988 by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) to provide a new form of university education in Belgium. Its founders were inspired by the hundreds of small institutions in the United States that place relatively more emphasis on teaching than on research. These liberal arts colleges, like Vesalius, select their students, and then develop their skills and understanding through close contact with professors. Classes are small, with only 25-35 students, so that instead of just taking notes on what the professor says, students can participate more actively in their education. They can ask questions and learn to be critical of what they are told. They write papers and make oral presentations, allowing them to develop skills that will serve them well in their working lives. Professors assess the students' work not just on one examination at the end of the course, but continuously on the basis of shorter examinations during the course and of written and oral work. Vesalius College has followed this model of education for the last twenty years, producing graduates who have been admitted to competitive graduate programmes in Belgium, the U.K., the U.S.A. and other countries and who have been hired by leading international companies.

The College offers three degree programmes, in business, communications and international affairs, all of which lead to a Bachelor's degree. These programmes have been favourably evaluated by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO) and are recognised by the Flemish government, and, on the principle of mutual recognition, by other European governments that participate in the Bologna process for the reform of university education.

Although Vesalius College is now legally independent of the VUB, the two institutions maintain very close relations. Several Vesalius courses are taught by VUB professors and some Vesalius professors teach in the VUB. Vesalius, though its student numbers are not large, has the great advantage of being able to draw on the academic facilities and student services of a large research university. The College also maintains close ties to other neighbouring institutions such as the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Boston University and the University of Kent, and is in the process of setting up collaborations with the Royal Music Conservatory, the Royal Military Academy, and RITS, a school for audio-visual and performing arts.

Instruction at Vesalius College is entirely in English (with the exception of language courses). Most of its students are native English speakers or have done their secondary education in English, but some students from other backgrounds have accepted the challenge of learning in English. They benefit from hearing English all the time. Roughly half of the courses are taught by native English speakers, and the rest of its international faculty is at ease with the language. For all students, native speakers or not, the College makes a concerted effort to improve their skills in written and oral expression.

As befits an institution in Brussels, the capital of Belgium and Europe and a centre for international business, both the faculty and the students at Vesalius College come from a

wide variety of nationalities. Class discussions are enriched by this cultural diversity, as is student life more generally. As an English language institution partnered with a Dutch-language university in a mostly French-speaking city, the College provides a unique opportunity to acquire an intercultural perspective.

Brussels is also an exciting place to study. The presence of the European Commission and NATO, as well as the headquarters of thousands of international organizations and seven hundred multinational corporations, is an invaluable resource for professors and students. They can observe close-up the changes taking place in Europe by class visits to these institutions, by hearing from guest speakers in classes, and by doing an internship in one of these organizations. The College offers a wide variety of courses that focus on the European Union and other aspects of contemporary Europe.

Andreas Vesalius

Andreas Vesalius was one of the premier freethinkers of the Renaissance and as such, makes clear the intellectual link between the College and its partner institution, the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Both the College and the University adhere to the principle of liberal inquiry, unfettered by prejudice deriving from religion, race, gender or political ideology. Born in Brussels around 1515, Vesalius was a pioneer of modern medicine, as evidenced by his crowning achievement, the first treatise of scientific anatomy, *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, published in 1543 and meticulously illustrated with 323 woodcuts. Yet throughout his career he had struggled against the received wisdom of classical physicians such as Galen and against the reluctance of universities and the Church to permit the dissection of human bodies. Only the boldest scientists risked attempting such research and Vesalius was the foremost among contemporary physicians to do so.

The Catalogue

This catalogue is the basic document for students enrolled at Vesalius College. They will refer to it all the time, so it should be kept handy. It is also a detailed introduction to the College for persons interested in applying for admission (see, in particular, the **admissions** section).

Above all, the catalogue lays out the College's **academic requirements**, specifying exactly what students need to do to earn the Bachelor's degree. *But please note that students are bound by the requirements in the catalogue for the year in which they start their degree programme (unless they shift entirely to the requirements in a subsequent catalogue).*

Each semester students need to choose the courses that they will take. The **course descriptions** in the catalogue give short statements of what courses are about, though students are welcome to contact professors to learn more about the contents and organization of individual courses. The list of courses offered in any semester and the hours at which they will be taught are made available to students during the preceding

semester. The **rules and regulations** for signing up for courses at registration and for making subsequent changes in course selection are given in the catalogue. The catalogue also lays out rules concerning course work and assessment.

Students will also find a guide to certain **academic opportunities**. Internships in business, government or non-profit institutions are an opportunity to see the practical application of concepts encountered in courses and to obtain professional experience. Studying for a semester in another country exposes students to other ideas and other ways of doing things.

The catalogue also describes a variety of **student services** and gives **key contacts** within the faculty and administration.