

EPHEC University College

Practical and Vocational Education with Pedagogical Proximity

With three sites (Woluwé, Louvain-la-Neuve, Schaerbeek), EPHEC offers its 6,400 students 8 bachelor full-time training degrees (HE EPHEC), 8 educational degrees in further education (EPHEC Promotion sociale), but also Continuous education programmes (EPHEC Formation), all provided by some 350 regular lecturers and a large number of independent associate lecturers.

Since its creation, EPHEC has excelled in offering first-cycle specialized education in business-related and technical fields which enable students to find jobs where their specific knowledge and their practical skills are required. EPHEC is positioning itself as an Entrepreneurial School, and was recognized as such by the AEI (Agence pour l'Entreprise & l'Innovation) of the Walloon Region as well as by the Brussels Region.

As a non-profit making association, EPHEC has set pedagogy as its core value. It aims at offering practical education and vocational programmes and at promoting pedagogical proximity with the learners. We want to embed learning and training in a practical approach and develop our programmes in line with the expectations of the industry and in the interest of society as a whole. We also want to foster pedagogical intimacy to encourage individual competencies and skills: we offer, for instance, flexible schedules to enable top-level sports figures to practise their sport and study at the same time. We rely on open and diversified learning and teaching methods to encourage the students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

The pedagogical approach is spread over the 3 years of the Bachelor degree and mainly involves:

- In the 1st year: the basic technical knowledge needed for the chosen field of practice, by closely linking up theory and practical applications;
- In the middle of cycle: the understanding of the tools and techniques that may be used in the workfield;
- In the 3rd year: preparing for employability.

At the end of the cycle, students in each of the full-time curricula are offered the possibility to choose a major pathway through a range of specialized courses, thus building up a better operational know-how likely to improve their professional integration.



The EPHEC Entreprendre wall celebrates the business creations of EPHEC students and graduates.



We have developed research expertise in a number of educational areas: guidance-oriented education; the added value of an individualized E-portfolio; the conditions for the successful implementation of a digital strategy; the effectiveness of tutoring activities and, more recently, of entrepreneurial education.

Further education programmes (evening/part-time): encouraging skilled employment

The EPHEC School of Further Education organizes bachelor degrees recognized by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (equivalent to full-time BA degrees), as well as higher education certificates and a specialization in tax law. These programmes are presented in a modular form to allow students to follow an individualized go-as-you-please pathway, whereby the validation of gained professional experience allows them to ease their individual study paths.

EPHEC, moreover, aims at developing permanent and continuing education in areas related to management and technology, to support high-skill employment. For two decades, the continuing education department of EPHEC has been organizing its "tax law workshops", a real must for bookkeepers, accountants and auditors as retraining courses. For some years now, EPHEC has organized short, professional retraining modules for insurance intermediaries.

In 2013, EPHEC's continuing education department, basing itself on EPHEC's areas of excellence, started to introduce short, specific training courses focusing on important competencies to help improve integration and progression in the professional world.





A company presents the students with the practical case that will be the subject of their "marketing challenge".



EPHEC students take an academic stay at the University of California, Riverside, coupled with an internship at Walt Disney World Resort.

Fostering the entrepreneurial mindset of students

An entrepreneurial mindset characterizes all our degree courses. Our Louvain la Neuve (LLN) campus benefits from the support of AEI, awarding the label of *entrepreneurial school*. An EPHEC Entrepreneurial Business Unit was created, working with different partners of the Yncubator (CEI, Mind & Market, AEI, IAD, Azimut, UCL-LSM). We also promote and help the mapping of support programs in favour of start-ups. We proposed to all EPHEC LLN students a series of monthly workshops that focus on the entrepreneurial mindset.

Another EPHEC Entrepreneurial Business Unit was set up in Brussels. Thanks to a subsidy from the Brussels Region for "support for entrepreneurship", our campuses in Woluwé and Schaerbeek can offer Brussels students some support to start up an enterprise, in partnership with JobYourself, one of its business cooperatives (Brussels Emergences) and with Wikipreneurs. It includes individual and collective coaching, a free access to the "Bruxelles Emergences" TEST pathway and to open co-working spaces, etc.

Finally, since December 2015, the academic status of "Student Entrepreneur" has been officially recognized within the University College. This helps students who have achieved this status reconcile their studies with the creation of an enterprise: flexible schedules, leave of absence for entrepreneurial reasons and access to a range of support schemes.

A desired partner for enterprises

With the backing support of its "External Contacts Unit", EPHEC University College wants to intensify close links with enterprises, professional bodies and local operators acting in the entrepreneurial sector.

This is conveyed in a number of ways, e.g.: courses provided by professionals, participation of our lecturers in the activities of professional bodies in line with our own degree programmes; guided company visits; the annual organization of "Job Days" on our three campuses; invitation of professionals and business creators to join our round tables and give their feedback on our teaching activities; focusing on practical work and case studies as well as professional coaching (a "marketing challenge" competition proposed every year by a

company active in the service sector), business start-up projects with professional coaching, the participation of professionals in the boards of examiners, simulated job interviews, creating a professional e-portfolio, etc.

Our collaboration with enterprises to enhance the development of hard and soft skills among our full-time students culminates with the 15-week internship which they carry out at the end of their studies. This secures their employability and almost unfailingly results in job offers.

A strong global presence

EPHEC University College remains fully in line with the objectives of the Bologna process and seeks to further the international relevance of its curricula. Students may – if they wish – take part in one of the numerous international weeks organized by many of our academic partner institutions. EPHEC itself organizes some of these project weeks devoted to topics related to marketing, accounting and computer technology.

This year, 250 students will embark on an academic mobility scheme lasting for at least one semester. With a total of 155 destinations in 42 different countries both in Europe and increasingly outside Europe, some of these academic exchanges lead to double degrees. We even offer the possibility of a "triple degree" in marketing with a Flemish University College and a Danish institution.

Over one hundred guest students will join EPHEC this year to continue their studies. A growing number of students will also conduct their practical training semester abroad. Many of our lecturers also take part in academic mobility programmes, which lead to profitable exchanges between higher education institutions from different countries.

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