

Hey, exchange student!

this is your

**Buddy  
starter  
pack**

**ARE YOU READY?**



# welcome!

Dear exchange student,

Welcome to Ghent and Ghent University, and congratulations on your decision to join our vibrant academic community! As an incoming exchange student, you are about to embark on an exciting journey filled with new experiences, learning opportunities and personal growth. We are thrilled to have you here and are committed to making your semester abroad as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

Moving to a new country can be both exciting and challenging. That's why we've set up a Buddy Programme. This Buddy Starter pack provides information about the Buddy Programme and what to expect.

We believe that the Buddy Programme will greatly enhance your experience at Ghent University by providing you with support and fostering meaningful connections. Our goal is to make you feel at home and to help you make the most of your time in Ghent.

We are excited to welcome you to our university and look forward to seeing you thrive both academically and personally. Wishing you a successful and fulfilling journey at Ghent University!

Warm regards,

Research and Internationalization Office (RIO) and the Buddy-coordinators



# Buddy Programme Overview:

So, you enrolled in our Buddy Programme? Great decision! We're glad to have you! The Buddy Programme is here to help you in several ways:

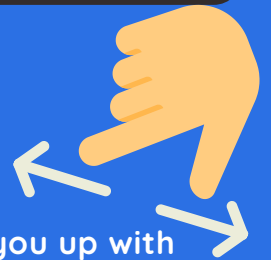
## a. Get acquainted with local students

The first and most obvious way to support you, is of course by pairing you up with one (or more) of our local students. In doing so, we hope to provide you with a peer who knows what it's like to be a student at Ghent University and in Ghent. Through their own experiences they can help and advise you.

The matching process for our Buddy Programme is designed to ensure that both you and your buddy have a truly enriching experience. We carefully consider shared interests, expectations, and fields of study to pair you with a local student who shares similar passions. This thoughtful matching helps both you and your buddy to benefit from the programme.

It's important to remember that our local students volunteer to be buddies because they are genuinely excited to welcome you. They choose to participate because they want to help you settle in, introduce you to our faculty and university, and share insider tips on student life in Ghent. In return, they look forward to learning about your culture and making new international friends. While every buddy may have their own unique approach, they are all encouraged to support you and share their experiences. If you come across issues or questions that go beyond the capacities and responsibilities of your buddy, do know that you can always contact us at RIO ([rio.psw@ugent.be](mailto:rio.psw@ugent.be)) to help you out!

Our goal is to foster meaningful connections and lasting friendships. We hope you will enjoy this journey and make unforgettable memories together!



## **b. Meet other international students**

In the Buddy Programme, you will also meet fellow international students! Throughout the semester, there will be several opportunities to get acquainted with the other students enrolled in the programme, both international and local students. We strive to organize a buddy-event every month (and smaller activities more often) in order to stimulate interaction and connection: socially, culturally and academically. In the past, we've had buddy-events such as an evening of friendly speed dating, a movie screening at the Africa Film Festival, picnicking at the park, study afternoons, etc.

You will also have the opportunity to be added to a WhatsApp group with all the other students of the programme. Don't hesitate to reach out and meet up with other students outside of the activities organized by the programme too. It's a great way to make new friends and explore together!

## **c. Cultural exchange and social integration**

Every month, our buddy coordinators will share a calendar packed with fun and interesting activities for you to enjoy Ghent and the surrounding areas. We hope these suggestions will help you explore and get to know Ghent in a way that's both exciting and culturally enriching, going beyond the typical tourist spots.

The activities on our calendar are carefully chosen to be budget-friendly, relevant to social and political sciences if possible, welcoming to international students (language-wise), and most importantly, super fun! We can't wait for you to dive into these experiences and make the most of your time here.

## **d. Practical and academic assistance**

We know that academic cultures can vary greatly from one university to another, and adapting to a new system can be challenging. To help make your academic journey as successful as possible here at Ghent University, our Buddy Programme also places a strong emphasis on academic support.

We'll provide you with study tips backed by science and encourage regular study habits through study afternoons. Our goal is to ensure you have the assistance you need to thrive academically during your exchange.

# to recap:

## what you can expect from us:

- **Orientation assistance:** help with navigating the campus, understanding academic procedures, and getting acquainted with university resources.
- **Cultural integration:** guidance on Belgian culture, traditions, and everyday life in Ghent.
- **Events and activities:** invitations to social events, excursions and cultural activities organized by the Buddy Programme.
- **Networking:** opportunities to meet other international and local students, fostering new friendships and connections.
- **Study support:** access to academic assistance, including study tips, study sessions, and guidance on finding additional help if needed.
- **WhatsApp group:** inclusion in a group chat with other students in the programme to ask questions, share experiences and arrange meetups.

## what we expect from you:

- **Engagement and participation:** active involvement and open communication, especially towards your buddy.
- **Open-mindedness and respect:** treat your buddy and other students with respect and kindness, fostering a positive and inclusive atmosphere.
- **Proactiveness:** don't hesitate to reach out to your buddy or programme coordinators if you need assistance or have any concerns. Especially in study-related issues, time is essential!
- **Mutual benefit:** understand that the programme aims to be enriching for both you and your buddy, so strive to make the experience beneficial and enjoyable for everyone involved.
- **Providing feedback:** share your thoughts and experiences with the Buddy Programme to help improve the program for future students.

# Getting started with your buddy:

## How you're paired

The pairing process for the Buddy Programme is thoughtfully conducted by our dedicated buddy coordinators. The primary aim is to match interests and expectations of the programme as closely as possible. We also consider your field of study to ensure that you and your buddy can relate on an academic level. While nationality is not a significant factor in the pairing process, it may be considered if some buddies express a desire to improve their skills in a particular language. Factors such as gender and age are not taken into account, ensuring a diverse and inclusive pairing system. This manual matching process is designed to create meaningful and enriching connections for both you and your buddy.

## Tips and ideas on activities with your buddy

Ghent is a vibrant city with plenty to offer and exploring it with your buddy can be a lot of fun! Some great activities to start with include going for a coffee at one of the many cozy cafes, taking a stroll around the historic city center, or enjoying a relaxing walk in one of Ghent's beautiful parks. Additionally, we encourage you to plan activities based on the shared interests identified during the matching process. This could include anything from attending a sports event, trying a new restaurant, or even cooking a meal together. The key is to have fun and make the most of your time in Ghent!

# friends

## What is expected of you in relation to your buddy

We want to emphasize that the Buddy Programme is a two-way street, and its success depends on the enthusiasm and initiative of both you and your buddy. We expect our exchange students to be proactive and engaged, this includes being respectful, open-minded, and considerate. Mutual respect and kindness are essential for fostering a positive and supportive relationship. We encourage you to be communicative, attend activities if possible, and take initiative to plan meetups. By actively participating and being open to new experiences, you will not only enhance your own experience but also contribute to the success of the Buddy Programme as a whole.



# We value your feedback:



We strongly encourage all participants to share their suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding the Buddy Programme. Your input is crucial in helping us understand what is working well and what areas need improvement. Whether you have a new idea for an activity, feedback on your buddy experience, or any concerns, we want to hear from you. Open and honest communication is key to making the Buddy Programme a success for everyone involved. Please don't hesitate to reach out - your voice matters! You can provide feedback through our online feedback form, which is accessible via [this link](#). At the end of your exchange, we'll also send you a survey to help us get a look of the strengths and weaknesses of our Buddy Programme.



# Contact information:



RIO



Contact us for general inquiries; if we can't help you, we'll figure out who can and refer you to the right people.

Contact information: via email ([rio.psw@ugent.be](mailto:rio.psw@ugent.be)) or come see us at our office at our faculty (by appointment only)

Adress: Technicum T1 - Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 41

Find a further description [here](#).



STUDENT  
COUNSELLORS

Contact the Student counsellors. They are available for individual advice and guidance concerning study attitude, planning and study skills.

Contact information: contact the counsellors individually (find their email adresses [here](#)) or through their [instagram](#).

BUDDY  
COORDINATORS



Contact your buddy coordinators through WhatsApp/the WhatsApp-group. Contact them for general inquiries, they'll most likely refer you to someone else but are there to help you where they can!



# BETTER TOGETHER

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We wish you the very best and hope you have an incredible experience. Good luck with your studies and adventures in Ghent, enjoy this exciting journey to the fullest!

RIO