



Actuarial
Alumni & Friends
Leuven

Newsletter - February 2025

Alumni & Friends News

Changes in the A&F Organisational Committee

After 4 years of dedication, Katrien Goovaerts and Siska De Pril are stepping down from the A&F organisational committee. We want to sincerely thank them for their invaluable contributions, enthusiasm, and commitment to strengthening our community. Their efforts have played a key role in making A&F what it is today!

As we bid them farewell in their committee roles, this also opens the door for fresh faces to step in. A&F thrives on the energy and ideas of its members, and we're always looking for engaged individuals to help shape the future of our community. Interested in getting involved? Feel free to reach out to Katrien Antonio and Cedric Goovaerts via contact@actuarialfriendsleuven.be to explore how you can contribute!

Lookback on A&F annual meeting 2024

The latest A&F meeting brought together professionals and students for an evening of insightful discussions under the theme *"The Insurance Landscape and Actuarial Profession - Reflections from Abroad."* With a strong lineup of distinguished speakers, this event provided valuable perspectives on the evolving role of actuaries and international market dynamics.

Global Perspectives on Actuarial Evolution

Amélie Breitburd delved into the changing role of actuaries in today's transformative era. As the industry faces rapid technological advancements, regulatory shifts, and emerging risks, Amélie emphasized the necessity for actuaries to embrace adaptability, broaden their skill sets, and step into more strategic roles. Her insights underscored the importance of combining technical expertise with a forward-thinking mindset to stay ahead in an evolving landscape.

A Deep Dive into the UK Insurance Market

Rudi Van Delm provided an in-depth analysis of the UK insurance market, offering key lessons that can be applied beyond its borders. He highlighted the market's regulatory environment and competitive dynamics. Attendees gained a clearer understanding of how the UK's mature car insurance sector navigates challenges and seizes opportunities, providing a compelling benchmark for other markets.

Networking in the Heart of KU Leuven's Actuarial Education Program

Following these thought-provoking discussions, participants had the chance to engage and continue the conversation during the networking drink at Hogenheuvcollege, the very heart of actuarial education at KU Leuven. This informal gathering fostered connections between professionals and aspiring actuaries.

We would like to express our gratitude to our distinguished speakers, Amélie Breitburd and Rudi Van Delm, for sharing their valuable insights and expertise. We also thank all attendees for their active participation in making this event a great success. Special appreciation goes to our partners - Amonis, AG Insurance, Belfius, and KBC - whose support made this event possible.

We look forward to our next gathering where we can continue to learn from each other and exchange exciting ideas!



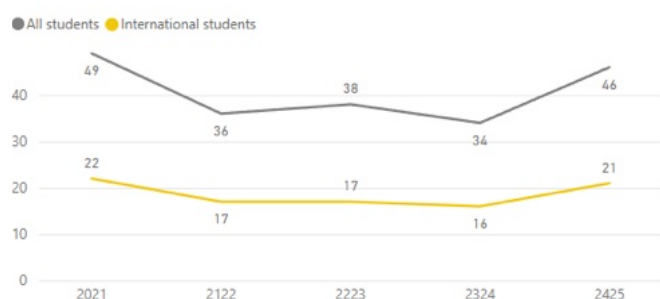
Top-left: Amélie Breitburd, bottom-right: Rudi Van Delm and Amélie Breitburd

News from our Alma Mater

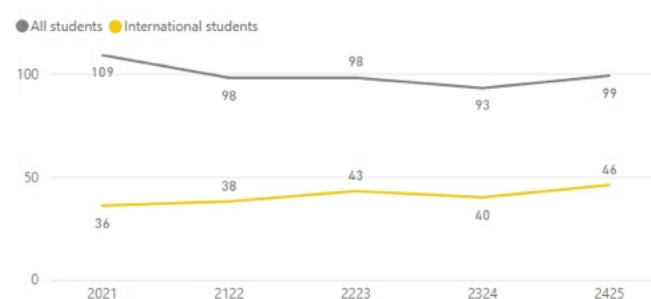
Training a new generation of aspiring actuaries and financial engineers: the MAFE 24-25 cohort

The Master's program in Actuarial and Financial Engineering (MAFE) welcomed 46 (in the English) and 8 (in the Dutch) new students in the program. They started their 2-year training at MSc level in September 2024. Together with the ongoing students the MAFE group now counts 110 students, of which 99 in the English and 11 in the Dutch program.

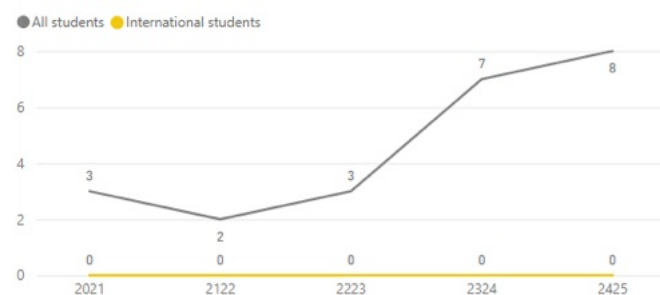
Below you see the evolution of the MAFE students over the past 5 academic years (source: FEB data management team).



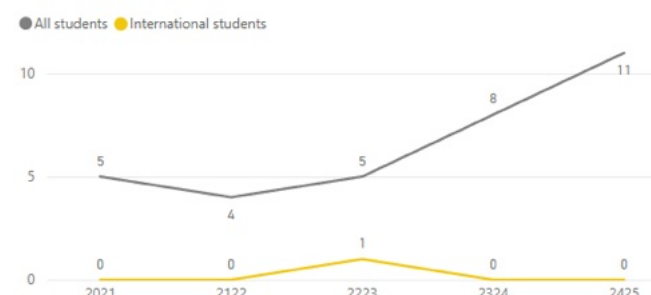
Number of new students joining the English MAFE program



Total number of students in the English MAFE program



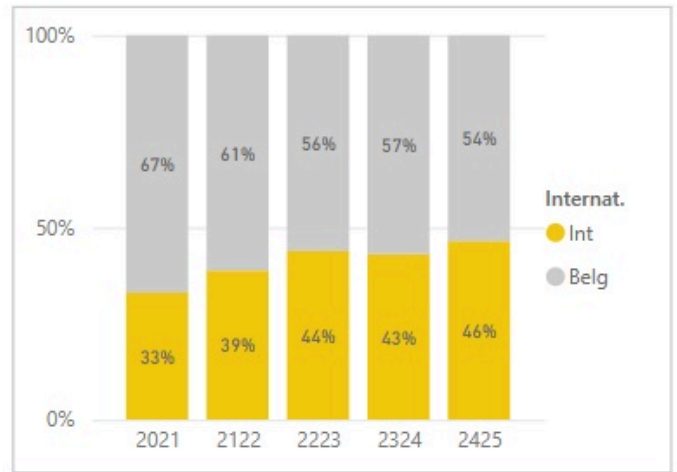
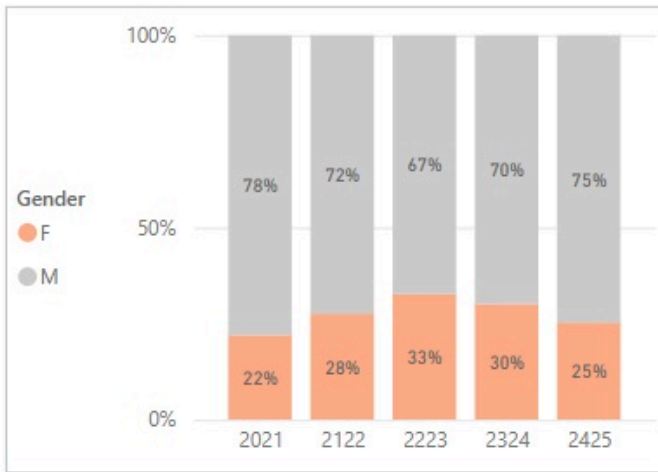
Number of new students joining the Dutch MAFW program



Total number of students in the Dutch MAFW program

Within the MAFE student group, we see a gender imbalance with 75% male and only 25% female students. Still, this evolution is in line with the composition in other quantitative programs.

In terms of group composition, the graph below shows that the program performs well in attracting international students.



Corresponding member Swiss Actuarial Association

During the annual meeting of the Swiss Actuarial Association (Bern, 6-7 September 2024) Katrien Antonio was awarded the title of corresponding member of the Swiss Actuarial Association, based on “achievements as a leader of the actuarial profession and as an innovative contributor to actuarial science“. The limited number of [corresponding members \(only 20\)](#) reflects the prestigious nature of this title.

Katrien addressed an acceptance speech entitled ‘Responsible actuarial learning’ during the assemblée générale of the association.

PhD Jens Robben completed

On October 2, 2024 Jens Robben successfully defended his PhD thesis entitled “Insights from fine-grained data for actuarial applications in mortality and non-life reserving“. Jens has an MSc in Mathematics (2019, KU Leuven) as well as an MSc in Actuarial and Financial Engineering (2020, KU Leuven). He joined the research group in 2020, and is one of the collaborators on the IA|BE mortality projection model. His main research focus is on mortality modelling. We highlight two chapters from his PhD thesis:

- Catastrophe risk in a stochastic multi-population mortality model**
 This paper, published in the Journal of Risk and Insurance in 2024, combines a decreasing stochastic mortality trend with a regime-switching mechanism that captures age-specific mortality shocks over a lengthy calibration period. As such, a toolbox is developed to incorporate mortality shocks in stochastic mortality projection models. Read the paper [here](#).
- The short-term association between environmental variables and mortality: evidence from Europe.**
 Using fine-grained, publicly available data, this paper studies the short-term association between environmental factors, i.e., weather and air pollution characteristics, and weekly mortality rates in small geographical regions in Europe. Read the paper [here](#).

Young alumni from the MAFE program know Jens as the teaching assistant for the Loss Models course, a foundation course in the program. In September 2024 Jens joined the Research Center for Longevity Risk, part of the University of Amsterdam, as a postdoc. He continues working on topics related to mortality modelling. Congratulations Jens!



From left to right: prof. Kristien Smedts (KU Leuven, chair of the committee), prof. Jan Dhaene (KU Leuven), prof. Katrien Antonio (KU Leuven, promoter), Jens Robben, prof. Karim Barigou (UCLouvain), prof. Tim Verdonck (UAntwerp). Prof. Séverine Arnold-Gaille (Uni Lausanne) joined the defense online.

AG Insurance research chair and interview in ECONnect

On October 16, 2024, the festive inauguration of a '600 Years KU Leuven' research chair sponsored by AG Insurance took place. With the establishment of the [chair 'Insurance Analytics for a Changing Risk Landscape' led by professor Katrien Antonio](#), a new research program is launched to support insurers in dealing with new and evolving risks. The chair coincides with two symbolic anniversaries: the 600th anniversary of KU Leuven and the 200th anniversary of AG Insurance. On the occasion of the chair's launch, FEB and Ekonomika Alumni magazine, ECONnect, had a conversation with Katrien. Read the interview in Dutch [here](#).

More information about the special 600 Years KU Leuven chairs: [600 Years KU Leuven Chairs — Support](#)



From left to right: Heide Delobelle (CEO AG Insurance), prof. Luc Sels (Rector KU Leuven), prof. Katrien Antonio (KU Leuven)

Hachemeister prize 2024 awarded to KU Leuven researchers

The Casualty Actuarial Society (CAS) awarded the 2024 edition of the Charles A. Hachemeister prize to the paper “Bridging the gap between pricing and reserving with an occurrence and development model for non-life insurance claims”. The paper is the result of a collaboration between A&F member dr. Jonas Crevecoeur, prof. Antonio, A&F member Stijn Desmedt and Alexandre Masquelein.

The paper was published in ASTIN Bulletin in 2023, and puts focus on bridging the tasks of pricing and reserving in non-life insurance. Hereto, an occurrence and development model for non-life claims is developed that tackles reserving and at the same time resolves inconsistencies in traditional pricing methods between actual observations and imputed best estimates of ultimate claim amounts.

The mission statement of this award is as follows “In honor of Charles Hachemeister’s passion for connecting ASTIN’s primarily European-based membership to challenges faced by CAS members in North America, emphasis in selecting the prize-winning paper will be placed on the paper’s impact for North American actuaries and practicality of application.”

Read more about the prize at [Charles A. Hachemeister Prize | Casualty Actuarial Society](#)

IA|BE Thesis Competition 2024

Congratulations to our A&F member Sebastian Beikircher (MAFE, 2023) who obtained the 3rd prize in the [IA|BE 2024 thesis competition](#).

Sebastian obtained a BSc in mathematics from TU Munich before joining the MAFE program in Leuven. He currently works as a pricing actuary with the ERGO group in Düsseldorf.

Congratulations to all 2024 IA|BE Prize winners:

- 1st Prize - Romain Vignaud - Excess of loss reinsurance: reinsurer pricing and related pitfalls.
- 2nd Prize - Othman El Hammouchi - Sensitivity analysis of stochastic reserving models using bootstrap simulations.
- 3rd Prize - Sebastian Beikircher - Regime switch in a stochastic mortality model of type Lee-Carter

AFMATH Conference 2025

Researchers in actuarial science and financial mathematics joined on Feb 3-4, 2025 for the yearly AfMath conference. The AG Campus hosted a diverse, international group of researchers. The conference is a longstanding joint initiative of the Belgian universities offering tracks and programs related to actuarial science and math finance. A big thanks to AG Insurance, the sponsors of the conference and the team of organisers for all their work and support!

[Actuarial and Financial Mathematics Conference](#)



From left to right: Part of the Organizing Committee of the AFMATH conference: prof. Steven Vanduffel (VUB), prof. David Vyncke (UGent), prof. Jan Dhaene (KU Leuven), Heidi Delobelle (CEO AG Insurance), prof. Griselda Deelstra (ULB), prof. Michèle Vanmaele (UGent), prof. Frédéric Vrins (UCLouvain), prof. Ann De Schepper (UAntwerpen), prof. Karel in't Hout (UAntwerpen) and prof. Julien Trufin (ULB).

Fellows of the Hogenheuvel College Building Bridges Event 2025

On 6 February, the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) hosted a new edition of its Fellow event at KU Leuven Campus Opera, bringing together academics, industry leaders, and alumni for an evening of discussions on academia-industry connections.

A highlight of the event was the keynote speech by Johan Thijs, who explored the role of AI in the economic ecosystem, shedding light on its transformative impact. Attendees also participated in dynamic break-out sessions, where key challenges and opportunities for collaboration were discussed.

The event underscored FEB's commitment to fostering meaningful connections between academia and the business world.



Celebration of 600 year KU Leuven

Feestkalender	
3 februari 2025	Patroonsfeest Feestelijk openingsconcert
15 en 16 februari 2025	Openingsweekend KU Leuven Inside Homecoming internationale alumni
23-24 april en 9 mei 2025	Verjaardagsconcert met universitaire ensembles
16 mei 2025	Opening <i>Dwaaltuin</i> Opening Kunst- en wetenschapsroute
Van 10 oktober 2025 tot 22 februari 2026	Tentoonstellingen in de Universiteitsbibliotheek en M – Museum Leuven
Doorlopend	Erfgoedwandelingen

2025 is going to be one big celebration. Our university is marking six centuries of groundbreaking research, inspiring education, and active global engagement. With a variety of events, they aim to spark your curiosity to celebrate this milestone. Prepare to be amazed!

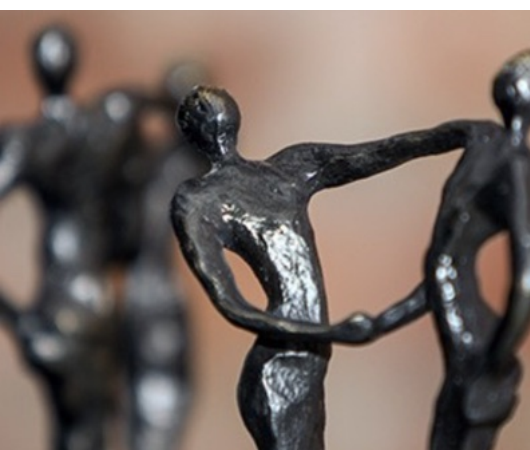
Interested? Follow up on the website www.kuleuven.be/600jaar

A word of our partners

AG Insurance

Inspiring workshops, challenges among colleagues, team-building activities, sports events... Who said a job in the insurance sector was boring? AG is a Top Employer for a reason. Being a market leader and having a warm, dynamic company culture can go hand in hand. Discover some of our opportunities and join us on this adventure!

- Reinsurance and accounting administration team manager ([NL](#) / [FR](#))
- Product manager & pricing analyst Accidents ([NL](#) / [FR](#))



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