

Study in Switzerland

University education

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1. Overview

2. The Universities

Switzerland's 12 universities comprise 10 cantonal universities and 2 Federal Institutes of Technology. A list of the twelve universities with links to their Web sites is available [here](#).

The language of instruction is German at the Universities of Basel, Bern, Lucerne, St. Gallen and Zurich and at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ).

The language of instruction is French at the Universities of Geneva, Lausanne, and Neuchatel and at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL).

The languages of instruction are German and/or French at the University of Fribourg; Fribourg is the capital of the bilingual Canton of Fribourg.

At the University of Lugano (USI), Switzerland's university in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland founded in 1996, courses are mainly taught in Italian.

3. Study Programmes

The number of university graduates continues to rise each year in Switzerland. Nevertheless, all study programmes have remained open to students having a valid maturity certificate or other certificate qualifying for university entrance (see [section 5](#)).

The only exceptions are study programmes in medicine (human medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine) and chiropractic. There may be entrance examinations to these study programmes depending on the number of applicants for admission in any given year. The limited number of openings is the reason why international students, apart from some [special cases](#), are not admitted to these study programmes.

A list of all study programmes is available as a [table](#) and a [data base](#).
Click here for a list of [study programs with English as the language of instruction](#).

4. Academic Degrees and Degree Programme Length

Since winter semester 2001/2002, the universities in Switzerland have been instituting reforms in degree programmes in accordance with the Bologna Declaration. This is a two-cycle (undergraduate/postgraduate) system and qualifications structure: (1) Bachelor's degree (180 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits or three years of full-time study), and (2) Master's degree (90–120 ECTS credits or 1.5–2 years of full-time study beyond the Bachelor's degree). Access to a Master's degree programme requires the successful completion of the Bachelor's degree. Access to doctoral level studies (dissertation) requires successful completion of a Master's degree with good grades.

The universities also offer an additional post-graduate degree called Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) (minimum 60 ECTS credits or one year of full-time study). The MAS does not give access to doctoral level programmes.

As the implementation of the Bologna reforms is not yet complete in Switzerland, academic degrees following the older system are still being awarded. In the older system, students are awarded the Licentiate or Diploma after completion of 4–5 years of full-time studies. Completion of a Licentiate/Diploma with good grades gives the holder access to doctoral level studies.

5. Admission Requirements

a. Admission to a Bachelor's Programme

For access to Swiss universities a valid Swiss maturity certificate or an equivalent foreign upper secondary school-leaving certificate qualifying for university entrance is required. Each of the universities makes its own decisions as to what certificates and qualifications it recognizes. Detailed information on general and country-specific access and admission requirements can be found at the CRUS/Swiss ENIC Web site. There are special regulations for study programmes in medicine (see section 3).

b. Admission to a Master's Programme

The prerequisite for access to a Master's programme is a successfully completed Bachelor's level programme. Graduates of Bachelor's programmes have access to certain Master's programmes, as listed in the data base available at uni-programme.ch. Each of the universities makes its own decisions as to whether a foreign Bachelor's degree gives the holder access to Master's programmes without entrance examinations, or access under certain conditions, or access with further requirements, or does not give access to Master's programmes.

c. Language Requirements

The universities require good knowledge of the language of instruction (see section 2 and the overview here). At the Master's level especially, the universities are offering an increasing number of study programmes in English.

For students that do not hold fully recognized certificates qualifying for university entrance, the admission requirements also include a university entrance examination (see here section 7).

6. Required Steps If You Want to Study in Switzerland

If you fulfil the requirements listed in section 5 above, proceed as follows:

a. Apply for Admission

Contact the university of your choice prior to the admission deadline. Some of the universities also accept online applications. The main documents that you will have to send to the university are your upper secondary school-leaving certificate (the original or a notarized copy) and an up-to-date passport photograph.

b. Entry/Visa and Residence Permit

Within 14 days of entering Switzerland, EU/EFTA citizens must register with the local authority (*Einwohnerkontrolle*, Residents' Registration Office) at the place of residence and apply for a residence permit.

You will need to present the following documents:

- Personal application for residence permit
- Valid passport or identity card
- Proof of registration at the university
- Evidence of sufficient funds (bank certificate or certified document)
- Proof of address at place of residence
- 2 passport photographs

Other foreign national students must contact the Swiss embassy or consulate in their own country and apply for a visa. If the responsible immigration or police authorities approve the application, the requirements for entry into Switzerland and for residence for the purpose of study are met.

Foreign nationals who are not EU/EFTA citizens and who do not require a visa should consult the Swiss embassy or consulate in their country for the current entry and residence requirements and formalities.

7. University Entrance Examination

a. Central Entrance Examination

Students that do not hold fully recognized certificates qualifying for university entrance must pass a university entrance examination. This applies mainly to students with foreign educational qualifications (see section 5).

The central entrance examination for students with foreign educational qualifications is conducted twice a year (June and August/September) in Fribourg by VKHS (Preparatory Courses for University Studies in Switzerland). VKHS also offers a University Preparatory Course (UPC) for the central entrance examination. To be admitted to a UPC, students must have (among other things): knowledge of either German or French corresponding at least to the level of B1/B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and provisional admission to a Swiss university. The UPC lasts from September to June of the following year and costs CHF 5,200.

VKHS (Vorbereitungskurse auf das Hochschulstudium)

Rue de Rome 1

CH-1700 Fribourg

Tel. +41 (0)26 347 16 16

Fax +41 (0)26 347 16 17

E-mail: [info\(at\)vkhs.ch](mailto:info@vkhs.ch)

Web site: <http://www.vkhs.ch/>

b. University of St. Gallen

As the only Swiss university to do so, the University of St. Gallen requires foreign national students to take its own entrance examination. The reason is that the university restricts the total percentage of foreign national students to 25%. Foreign nationals who hold a recognized Swiss maturity certificate are exempt from this examination requirement.

c. Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology

The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich ETHZ) and Lausanne (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne EPFL) offer the opportunity to take entrance examinations to applicants, both foreign nationals and Swiss, who do not hold a fully recognized upper secondary school-leaving certificate qualifying for university entrance.

ETH Zurich

Admissions Office
Rämistrasse 101
HG F 21.3
CH-8092 Zurich
Tel. +41 (0)44 632 56 53

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale (EPFL)

AA-EBM CMS, Station 4
CH-1015 Lausanne
Tel. +41 (0)21 693 22 95

8. Costs

Tuition fees per year 2010/2011 (in CHF)

	<u>EPFL</u>	<u>ETHZ</u>	<u>BS</u>	<u>BE</u>	<u>FR</u>	<u>GE</u>	<u>LA</u>	<u>LU</u>	<u>NE</u>	<u>SG</u>	<u>ZH</u>	<u>USI</u>
For <i>Swiss students</i>	1,266	1,288	1,400	1,310	1,310	1,000	1,160	1,570	1,030	2,040	1,378	4,000
<i>Additional fees for foreign students</i>					300				550	300	200	4,000
For <i>foreign students</i>	1,266	1,288	1,400	1,310	1,610	1,000	1,160	1,570	1,580	2,340	1,578	8,000

Living expenses: between CHF 19,000.– and 29,000.– per year (depending on the location of the university and personal demands)

9. Scholarships

The Swiss Government grants university scholarships to foreign students who have graduated from university or, to a limited extent, university of applied sciences or advanced arts programmes. Detailed information on the application requirements for the scholarships, the relevant countries, and how to apply are provided by the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS):

Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS)

Hallwylstrasse 4
CH-3003 Bern
Tel. +41 (0)31 323 26 76
Fax +41 (0)31 232 30 20

The mobility centres of the Swiss universities provide information on scholarships for international students granted by universities.

10. Health Insurance Coverage

All persons living in Switzerland for more than three months, including also international students, must have basic health insurance coverage. Students from countries that provide international mutual health coverage may be exempted from the compulsory health insurance. Other students may be exempted if they have equivalent health insurance coverage in their home country.

For further information, please see:

Die Krankenversicherung für ausländische Studierende in der Schweiz [Health insurance coverage for international students in Switzerland] (in German)

Leistungsaushilfe in der Schweiz [Explanatory informations on health insurance coverage for students from EU or EEA countries] (in German or French)

11. Academic Calendar

The academic year is divided into two semesters. Classes are held starting in the fall from week 38 to week 51 and in the spring from week 8 to week 22. Detailed information is available [here](#).

12. Further Information

- Brochures about studying in Switzerland in English:
 - o "[Studying in Switzerland: Universities, 2010](#)"
 - o "[Studying in Switzerland: Universities of Applied Science, 2010](#)"
 - o "[Studying in Switzerland: Universities of Teacher Education, 2009](#)"
 - o "[Campus and Research Park Switzerland, 2008](#)"
- The English–language Web site <http://www.swissuniversity.ch/> provides information for international students wanting to study in Switzerland and for universities seeking cooperation partners.

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