

Welcome to the
University of Applied Sciences
Western Switzerland

2010
HANDBOOK FOR INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS

This booklet is produced for information only and is not exhaustive. Every effort has been made to ensure that it is accurate at time of going to print.

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Introduction

1.1 Switzerland

Switzerland lies in Central Europe. It is a land-locked country bordered by Germany to the North, Austria (and Liechtenstein) to the East, Italy to the South and France to the West. Switzerland comprises of a total land mass of 41'284 square kilometres. Although Switzerland does not have any natural ocean borders, it does have several inland lakes, some of which form its borders with neighboring countries.

Switzerland has a population of 7.6 million people grouped in 4 linguistic areas: German (70%), French (25%), Italian (4%) and Romansch (1%). The Swiss confederation was founded on August 1, 1291.

1.2 Political Organization

Switzerland is a confederation of 26 States (Canton). In 1848, Switzerland adopted a new constitution¹ marking the power of the central government while at the same time leaving a relative degree of sovereignty in the hands of the States. It constituted a decisive step towards democracy. It promoted centralization without rejecting liberalism, in line with Swiss traditions. This federalist system is still in force today.

Endowed with their own constitutions, their own governments and their own laws, the States have the right to legislate in certain areas, such as education, public health, land-use planning, the reservation of law and order, and judicial organization. They transfer to the Confederation a whole series of powers such as defense, foreign affairs, postal services and the railways. The States themselves are divided into communes, which also enjoy certain autonomy. Communes administer their assets and manage local public services.

Direct democracy is entrenched firmly at each of the three levels. Citizens elect not only the members of their parliaments, but members of their governments as well, except for the Federal Council. Moreover, important questions are submitted to popular vote, as it is the people's right. In Switzerland, the members of

¹ Completely revised and adopted by the people in 1999

parliament are not professionals; they fulfill their local or federal mandates along with other jobs.

1.3 Lausanne

Lausanne is a city in the French-speaking part of Switzerland with a population of 135,000 (250,000 in the greater Lausanne area). Situated on the shores of Lake Geneva (French: Lac Léman), and facing Évian-les-Bains (France) and with the Jura mountains to its north. Lausanne is located some 50 km (31 mi) northeast of Geneva. It is the capital city of the State of Vaud and of the district of Lausanne. It is the seat of the International Olympic Committee and offers many opportunities for studies, business, shopping, culture, sport and medical care.

Yverdon-les-Bains is situated near Lausanne (50 km) and has a population of 25,775. Situated on the shore of the Lake of Neuchâtel, it is very famous in Switzerland thank to its hot thermal springs.

1.4 HES-SO

A true vocational and training university, the University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland (HES-SO) welcomes more than 12,000 students in seven States: Bern, Fribourg, Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel, Valais and Vaud. Thus, this establishes it as the largest advanced professional vocational training complex in Switzerland.

Set up in 1998, the HES-SO provides university level teaching, highly focused on practical experience in six main fields:

- ENGINEERING SCIENCES
 - CHEMISTRY AND LIFE SCIENCES POLE
 - BUILDING ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENT POLE
 - INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGIES POLE
 - INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES POLE
- BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES
- DESIGN AND VISUAL ARTS
- HEALTH
- SOCIAL WORK
- MUSIC AND THEATRE

These high level courses prepare the student to the conduct of professional activities requiring scientific knowledge and methods. They are meant to guarantee a quick entry into the labor market to whose trends and requirements the HES-SO gives close attention.

The HES-SO conforms with the rules of the European model by adopting the two-level structure of studies (Bachelor's and Master's degrees). Furthermore, it applies the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) both for the Bachelor's studies and for the Master's studies.

2 Immigration

2.1 Passport

Make sure you have a valid passport.

2.2 Visa

Students coming from EU/EEA-countries (European Union/European Economic Area) do not need to apply for a **visa**. Students coming from the USA (holding an American passport) who plan to stay less than 90 days in Switzerland do not need to obtain a visa before arriving. Students coming from outside EU/EEA-countries, or staying more than 3 months, must acquire a **visa (B permit)**. It must be obtained *before one enters* Switzerland. It is better to go to a Swiss Embassy in your country with your passport and letter of admission or contact the Embassy and they will send an application form by mail to complete. For any further information, please contact the Swiss Embassy in your country

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/fr/home/rebs.html>

A Tourist visa is only valid for 3 months (90 days) and cannot be changed into a student permit after your arrival in Switzerland. You can check on the link below if you require a special visa for tourist purposes. <http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home.html>

The address of your country's embassy or consulate in Switzerland might be useful.

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home.html>

There is an informative web site. Take a look at what the requirements are before you leave!

2.3 Schengen Area Visa

During your stay in Switzerland you may wish to travel to neighboring countries.

If your country does not have any bilateral agreements to let you travel in these countries without a visa, there is a collective visa option called Schengen Visa. It will enable you to travel to Schengen member countries without any hassle. Apply for it at one of the Schengen country embassies in your own country; you may not get it once you are in Switzerland!

The Schengen Area is the territory constituted by the countries that are members of the Schengen Agreement. The aim of the agreement is to allow free circulation of people within the territory of the member countries.

For further information about Schengen Area and visas please refer to the following website : <http://www.schengenvisa.cc/>

3 Health and Insurance Issues

3.1 Health

Health care in Switzerland is good but expensive. If you become ill and need urgent medical attention, contact the nearest health-care center "Permanence médicale" or the CHUV (University Hospital Center for the Canton of Vaud): + 41 21 314 11 11. You can visit them without an appointment. In an emergency, the number to dial in Switzerland is 144.

In case of medical visit, all the costs must be paid directly to the doctor or hospital but your health insurance may partially reimburse you later.

Medications prescribed by a doctor can be picked up from any pharmacy. Pharmacies are open from 8:30am to 6:30pm on workdays. Outside these hours, most pharmacies display a notice with the address of the nearest pharmacy on night or week end duty.

If you are on medical treatment of any nature, please plan to travel with the prescribed medicine.

3.2 Health insurance

According to Swiss law all residents (this includes students) are required to have health insurance.

Students coming from EU/EEA countries must obtain the "European Health Insurance Card" from their foreign insurance company. As soon as you arrive in Switzerland, you must send a copy of the European Health Insurance Card to the Organe Cantonal de Contrôle, Rue Saint-Martin 2, Case postale 9716, CH-1014 Lausanne: <http://www.occ.ch>. For more information, contact: info@occ.vd.ch.

In most cases you may remain affiliated to your own insurance company, and you will not need to buy private insurance in Switzerland.

In case of illness or accident, you must pay up front. Then send a copy of the bill and a copy of your European Health insurance Card to: Institution Commune LAMAL, KVG, Gibelinstrasse 25, CH-4502 Solothurn: <http://www.kvg.org> or info@kvg.org and you will be reimbursed.

Students coming from outside EU/EEA countries may remain affiliated to their own insurance company provided that they ask permission for an exemption (for non-tourist purpose, more than 90 days) from the "Organe Cantonal de Contrôle": <http://www.occ.ch>, email : info@occ.vd.ch

A written statement from the foreign insurance company giving full details on the extent and the amount of the coverage must be included in the request.

To obtain an exemption, the "Organe cantonal de contrôle" will verify that:

1. Health insurance is compulsory in the home-country of the student
2. The coverage guaranteed by the insurance is as complete as that requested by the Swiss law.

3.3 Liability Insurance Coverage

Liability insurance is required. Check with your home university for information on Foreign Travel Insurance (which will include liability).

3.4 Vaccinations

No vaccinations are required for entry into Switzerland.

4 Information about student housing

4.1 Where will I stay during my time in Switzerland?

Swiss universities do not usually have on-campus housing.

You'll stay in a student's house hosted by **Fondation Maisons pour Etudiants (FMEL)**

For information, visit the website *Fondation Maisons pour Etudiants* <http://fmel.ch/en/houses/bourdonnette/>

Fondation Maisons pour Etudiants

Av. de Rhodanie 64
CH - 1007 LAUSANNE
Phone: +41 21 617 81 54 or 56 Fax +41 21 617 81 66
<http://www.fmel.ch> email: info@fmel.ch

4.2 My address in Switzerland

For organizational reasons it is not possible to give you the exact address of your room (i.e. name and address of the student hall and room number) before your arrival at the Fondation Maison pour Etudiants

4.3 What do the rooms look like?

These rooms differ in size and furnishings. In most halls students may share a bathroom. Bedclothes are provided but you'll have to bring your towels in your luggage. Every tenant is responsible for cleaning his/her room and the communal areas.

There is no segregation by gender in the buildings.

4.4 Where can I do my laundry?

Every student residence is equipped with washing machines and dryers. Irons and ironing boards are, however, not provided.

5 Transport

Switzerland is famous for the promptness, reliability, diversity and extent of its public transportation.

Students participating in Summer School will be given a "Swiss Travel Pass" which will allow you to travel on all public transportation for free during the month long program.

5.1 Trains

The trains (CFF) <http://www.cff.ch/> go almost everywhere in Switzerland.

Pyjama trains also operate only on Friday and Saturday nights, between Geneva, Morges, Lausanne, Vevey and Montreux from 1.00 a.m. to 2.30 a.m. Cost : CHF 5.- to CHF 15.-, depending on the route.

5.2 Buses

The **bus** or **metro** service in Lausanne (TL) <http://www.t-l.ch> is a reliable means of local transport. With a Swiss Travel Pass the use of buses and metro is free.

Pyjama buses operate only on Friday and Saturday nights, departing from Place St-François (Lausanne) between 1:00 a.m. and about 3:20 a.m., cost: CHF 3.50. Schedules can be found at: <http://www.service-pyjama.ch>

The bus service in Yverdon-les-Bains : www.travys.ch

5.3 Car

The legal driving age in Switzerland is 18. If you have a valid foreign license, you may drive for up to 12 months. There is a shortage of on-street parking in the urban areas of Lausanne and the car parks are about CHF 2.50 /hour.

6 Living in Switzerland

6.1 Currency

The Swiss currency unit is the Swiss Franc (abbreviated to Sfr., CHF or simply Fr.) Coins come in 5, 10, 20 and 50 centimes and 1, 2 and 5 franc pieces. Banknotes come in denominations of CHF 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 1000. It is not unusual to use 100 and 200 CHF notes to pay for purchases, even small ones.

6.2 Credit card or cash?

In Switzerland it is still easier to pay in cash. Credit cards are not used as frequently as in other countries but the international ones (Visa, Master, etc) are mostly accepted. Most debit cards are accepted at local ATM's to withdrawal cash.

6.3 Living expenses

The living costs in Switzerland are among the highest worldwide. In April the prices for the following items were approximately as follows:

Food item	Quantity	CHF	Euro	USD
Milk	1 litre	1.40	0.85	1.40
Orange juice	1 litre	1.20	0.73	1.20
Butter	250 g	2.60	1.59	2.60
Bread	1 kg	3.20	1.95	3.20
Cheese	250 g	5.50	3.34	5.50
Ham	250 g	7.00	4.27	7.00
Beer	6	8.00	4.88	8.00
Coffee	1	2.8	1.7	2.8
Lunch in a school cafeteria	1 meal	8	5.2	8
Pizza (restaurant)	1	15 - 20	10.3 -12.2	15 - 20
Cinema ticket	1	17	9.15	17
Disco Entrance	1	15 - 35	9.15 - 21.35	15 - 35

Approximate exchange rates (April 2010)

1 CHF = 0.95 USD

1 CHF = 0.70 EUR

6.4 Shops

Most shops are open from 8:30 am - 7:00 pm, except on Saturdays when the majority of stores close at 6:00 pm. Most shops are closed on Sunday, but some local gas station shops are open Sunday mornings. Many larger stores and supermarkets have at least one late-night opening until 8:00 or 9:00 pm.

Migros, Coop, Denner, Carrefour, Aldi, Lidl are cheap supermarkets and offer most of what you need.

Most cities in Switzerland have weekly farmer markets (with fresh fruits, vegetables, fish, flowers, etc...).

6.5 Postal services

Post offices are open from Monday to Friday from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm (some are closed for lunch), and on Saturdays from 8:00 am to 11:00 am.

A letter (up to 100g within Switzerland, up to 20 g to foreign countries) or postcard can be sent either by A-Post (Prioritaire), which takes one day within Switzerland, or B-Post (Non Prioritaire), which takes two to three days within Switzerland and up to a few weeks abroad.

	A rate	B rate
Switzerland	1.00 CHF	0.85 CHF
Europe, Mediterranean countries	1.30 CHF	1.20 CHF
Others	1.80 CHF	1.40 CHF

6.6 Telephone

There are several companies offering connections as well as prepaid telephone cards. In order to save money, you should compare the offers of different companies (Swisscom, Orange, Sunrise and Tele2). The homepage ww.comparis.ch might help you to choose the best solution.

6.6.1 Local Calls

Calls within Switzerland are cheaper between 5 pm and 8 am (mobile: 7 pm to 7am) and on weekends. For emergency contact numbers see section 6.8.

International Calls: First, dial 00, then the country code, followed by the area code (without the first 0 or 9) and finally the local number. Depending on your provider, calls are cheaper between 9 pm and 8 am and on weekends. Flash card offers very good prices for international calls. There are available at many locations, including Kiosks.

6.6.2 Public Phones

Most public phones work with prepaid card (Taxcard) very few still with coins. You can use any prepaid telephone card on all Swisscom public phones. Telephone cards are available at most kiosks. Read the instructions on the back of the card.

6.6.3 Mobile Phones

We recommend buying a cheap mobile phone and using a prepaid SIM-card. This involves no fixed monthly cost; you buy special refill tickets in advance for as much money as you want to spend. Migros «M-Budget» and Coop «Prix Garantie» offer the best prices. However, the calls are more expensive than the land line phone or with a special mobile phone contract. A mobile phone contract usually only makes sense if you stay for a longer time and use the phone a lot. In this case you can choose between three providers: Swisscom, Sunrise and Orange. Often, the providers have special offers for young people. For further information: www.mbudget-mobile.ch; www.coop.ch/coopmobile; www.sunrise.ch ; www.orange.ch ; www.swisscom.ch.

If you want to use a mobile phone from your own country (when you already have one), make sure it is GSM compliant. This depends on whether or not your phone can operate on the frequency range that the Swiss GSM networks use (some older phones sometimes have problems, for modern phones this is usually not a problem). Cell phones from North America often do not work, unless you have purchased the international plan. Depending on which agreements your GSM provider at home has made with the providers in Switzerland, you could also use your mobile phone in Switzerland with your mobile phone number from home. Since the prices per minute are extremely high, use it only for emergencies or for the first days after your arrival. Ask your GSM provider from home for details.

6.7 Electricity

Voltage: 230 volts/50 hertz, single phase, for appliances and electrical equipment up to 2,200 watts; Electric points: Universal plugs type C

7 Entertainment and Social Life

7.1 Cinemas

Lausanne and its area has many cinemas; schedules can be found in the newspaper or on the internet: <http://lausanne.cinemas.ch/> Look for V.O. "*Version Originale*" for English or other original language films.

7.2 Cultural events

Lausanne offers many theatre performances, concerts and music festivals. A program can be found on the Lausanne Tourist Office's website:

<http://www.lausanne.ch/> Your student card gives you various discounts at cultural events.

One more website to check out is the Wikipedia travel guide for Lausanne: <http://wikitravel.org/en/Lausanne>

7.3 Museums

Lausanne is a city of culture with more than 18 museums open Tuesday-Sundays: <http://www.lausanne.ch/musees>

8 Check-List

Before you leave for Switzerland, make sure you have the following:

- Valid Passport
- Visa if required
- European Health Insurance card (EU/EEA students)
- A letter from your health insurance company verifying your coverage, and a detailed documentation of that coverage (non EU students)
- A letter from your Liability Insurance coverage