

GTI UNIGE FAQ list

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1) When will I receive my letter of acceptance from UNIGE?

Once you have sent your application, you will receive a letter of acceptance with all the necessary information for your stay in Geneva.

Graduate students:

Geneva School of Social Sciences Students' Office will send you your letter of acceptance by email and by post, usually around beginning of June.

Exchange students:

UNIGE International Affairs office will send you your letter of acceptance:

- For the autumn semester: 31 May at the latest
- For the spring semester: 30 November at the latest

2) Swiss VISA: what's the procedure? How long does it take? When can I get back my passport?

According to your nationality, you can check if you need a Swiss visa or not, here:

https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/publiservice/weisungen-kreisschreiben/visa/liste1_staatsangehoerigkeit.html

If you do need a Swiss visa and you are presently studying at THU, you can apply for a Swiss visa either at the Swiss Embassy in Beijing either at the Swiss representation (Embassy or closest Consulate) in your home country.

You will need to apply for a "National visa for a stay of more than 90 days"

If you are applying for a Swiss visa in Beijing:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/china/en/home/visa/entry-ch/more-90-days.html>

To lodge your application at the Swiss Embassy in Beijing, you have to appear in person at the Embassy counter. Appointments must generally be made with the company VFS Global via the internet address:

<http://www.vfsglobal.ch/switzerland/china/>

Prepare the documentation and submit your visa application.

Important: after you submitted your visa application at the counter, you can get back your passport. The Embassy will inform you when and how pick up your visa. The Embassy will not contact the students again, they will have to do so themselves. After 3-4 weeks they can send an Email to the visa section to enquire about the status of their visa application, if the Swiss authorities have already issued an authorization the students will then be instructed on the procedure to follow.

In 2018, the students from THU applied for Swiss visas by mid-July and all got their visas before the end of August.

3) Swiss residence permit: what's the procedure?

The Swiss visa obtained allows you to enter the country but once in Switzerland, you must ask for a residence permit at the local population office.

- Fill in [form E](#) (« Séjour à Genève pour études ») and send it to OCPM (address below). The English version is available here: <https://www.unige.ch/international/en/incoming/international-non-erasmus-students/todolist/visa-and-residence-permit-guidelines/>

Please note: Europeans/EFTA citizens must attach the following documentation: attestation of registration to school; 1 ID photo with last name and first name on back; evidence of financial means or official notification of your scholarship. **Non-Europeans must attach the following documentation:** attestation of eligibility to school; CV and letter of motivation stating intentions after completion of studies; detailed study plan; financial guaranties or form O only if you have a family member garant who lives in CH; copy of rental contract or written statement of landlord (with copy of main rental contract or of landlord's ID); it's mentioned that a copy of police record (certificate of good conduct) should be provided as well, but after checking with the authorities we found out that permit applications will be processed even without, such a document might be requested later on only in case of doubt.

Residence permit fees for non-Europeans citizens: about CHF 250.-

Population office for Geneva Canton:

[Office Cantonal de la Population et des Migrations](#) (OCPM)

Route de Chancy 88, 1213 Onex

Phone : +41 22 546 48 88

Email : sejour.ocpm@etat.ge.ch

Opening hours : Mon-Tue, Thu-Fri: 7h30am-1h30pm

Wed: 9am-4h30pm

In case you found an accommodation outside Geneva Canton (for example in Vaud Canton or in France), you will need to apply for a residence permit at the local office.

Population office for Vaud Canton:

[Service de la population – Division étrangers](#)

Avenue de Beaulieu 19, 1014 Lausanne

Phone : +41 21 316 46 46 (Mon-Fri 8h30-11h30am)

Opening hours : Mon-Fri 8-11h30am, 1h30-4pm (5h30pm on Thursdays)

4) How to find an accommodation in Geneva? Is it possible to live in France? In another Swiss Canton?

The UNIGE accommodation office offers some accommodation possibilities: <https://www.unige.ch/batiment/service-batiments/logements/en/#toc0>

[Cité Universitaire](#): apply before 31 May for the fall semester, before 30 November for the spring semester

UNIGE Facebook page with accommodation offers: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/683821955129698/> (students have to join the page with full first and family names, not with nicknames)

Housing agencies:

https://www.homegate.ch/rent/apartment/region-geneva/matching-list?lastMap=ctn_ge (<https://www.homegate.ch/en>)

<https://www.immoscout24.ch/en>

<https://www.immobilier.ch/en/map/rent/apartment/geneva/geneva/page-1>

<http://www.comptoir-immo.ch/home.aspx>

https://www.rosset.ch/location/?objCategorie=1&objType=0&LSort=pieces_asc&page_no=1&place_lat=46.2043907&place_lng=6.143157699999961&localite_npa=Canton%20Genève&radius=13&zoom=12

<http://www.buy-rent.ch/appartement-louer.html>

Other:

Graduate Institute student residence: <http://graduateinstitute.ch/fr/home/students/infoadmin/maisondesetudiants.html>

Webster Uni: <http://www.lesbergesdurhone.com/index.html>

Anibis: <https://www.anibis.ch/fr/immobilier-immobilier-locations-geneve--418/advertlist.aspx>

Régimo: https://www.home.ch/fr/louer/detail/appartement/sous_categorie-chambre/a-Gen%C3%A8ve/1.0+pieces/105219402/

Régimo (for men only):

https://www.home.ch/fr/louer/detail/appartement/sous_categorie-chambre/a-Gen%C3%A8ve/1.0+pieces/105219401/

Ciguë: <http://cigue.ch/the-cigue-presented/>

5) Where and how to buy health insurance in Switzerland?

Medical and pharmaceutical costs are high in Switzerland. You must purchase medical and accident insurance upon your arrival. As an exchange student, you are eligible for health insurance at the price of CHF 80 per month. [Discounted insurance](#) is available for mobility students (partnership negotiated with UNIGE). You are nevertheless free to choose any health and accident insurance provider that is recognized in Switzerland. The various available insurance options will be sent to you with your letter of acceptance.

If you have private insurance, you can request recognition of its equivalence using the form “[formulaire de contrôle de l'équivalence de l'Assurance Maladie](#)” (FR) or “[check form for the equivalence of Swiss health insurance 2018](#).” (EN) Ideally, this should be done before your arrival in Switzerland.

6) How to open a bank account in Switzerland?

Opening a bank account can be a simple task, but in some cases, it can be a long and tedious process.

Some banks will open an account without proof of residence, while others will refuse to open an account without first seeing your B permit. Some banks will require an attestation from OCPM stating that your permit is in progress. The requirements differ not only by bank but also by branch, or depending on the student's nationality.

Banks are very busy at the beginning of the fall semester opening accounts for students. Consequently, you may need to wait a week or so for an appointment.

In general however, Swiss banks are very “student friendly”, and the checking/savings accounts, internet banking, bank cards etc. are usually free of charge.

Important for American Citizens

If you are from the United States, some bank branches might make you schedule a special appointment with a person who handles American accounts because of American laws to prevent tax evaders. It is important when scheduling an appointment to let the bank (especially UBS) know right away that you are American so that you can have an appointment with the correct person and avoid having to cancel and reschedule. For stays shorter of six months, banks might refuse to open a bank account.

We suggest you to contact the following bank branches, located in the area of Plainpalais (close to UNI MAIL). They will facilitate the opening of a Swiss bank account, but you are free to select any bank of your choice.

Please note that this information do not engage the responsibility of the University of Geneva, please check the conditions directly with the banks.

Reminder: please do not forget to close your account before leaving Geneva.

BCGE – Plainpalais branch office - Rue de Carouge 22

BCGE Privé 12-25 account, no banking fees (for students over 25 years, fees CHF 3.- per month) Open a bank account on appointment 058 211 21 00.

- Valid ID card or passport

- Attestation « hôte des affaires internationales » - Residence permit

The account will be activated after 1 or 2 weeks delay.

For residents in France CHF 3.- fees per month, plus CHF 18.- every 3 months <https://www.bcge.ch/privé-jeunes-en>

POSTFINANCE – Plainpalais branch office - Rue Pictet-de-Bock 6 Student account aged 18 to 30, no banking fees

Minimum 6 months – you can close it abroad

- Valid ID card or passport

- Attestation « hôte des affaires internationales » - Tax identification number in your country

- Residence permit

For residents in France CHF 25.- fees per month

1 week for the account opening (or on the same day if you have all requested documentation)

<https://www.postfinance.ch/en/private/products/accounts/student-account.html>

UBS – Plainpalais branch office - Boulevard du Pont-d'Arve 39

Students aged 18 to 30, no banking fees

Open a banking package with or without appointment, please contact: M. Raoul GONZALEZ 0848 848 051, raoul.gonzalez@ubs.com. Immediate opening.

- Valid ID card or passport

- Attestation « hôte des affaires internationales »



- Proof of residence delivered by OCPM for students renting rooms in private homes - Residence permit (if you do not hold it yet, you can send it later on)

5 months duration possible

For residents in France, no fees, but you need to communicate your NIF (tax identification number)

Students from USA should contact M. Carlo HAYES, UBS de la Cité, 022 375 33 13, carlo.hayes@ubs.com

You can also open a rent guarantee account « garantie de loyer ».

<https://www.ubs.com/ch/en/swissbank/private/pay-and-save/bundles/campus.html>

7) Mobile & data, where to buy a SIM card in Switzerland?

You can buy one in regular shops, in electronics stores, at the main train station, at the airport, in operators' shops, small shops, at the post office. Credit to top your card can be bought at the same places, or online.

To get a Swiss SIM card, you need a valid ID (passport or identity card).

Mobile and data coverage (2G/3G/4G LTE) is generally excellent in Switzerland, and Geneva is no exception. There are three main operators in Switzerland:

- Swisscom (partly owned by the Swiss Confederation),
- Salt (formerly Orange)
- Sunrise

They all offer prepaid SIM cards in regular, micro, and nano formats. If you've picked the wrong SIM format, phone shops like Mobilezone will cut it for you, sometimes for free.

The Swiss mobile industry is considerably more expensive than its European neighbors. Swisscom offer the best coverage, but this comes at a steeper price.

If you plan to use mostly data, [Lebara](#) offers inexpensive plans from 14.90/month for 1GB of data. On [Yallo](#), you can also obtain cheap SIM cards – text to anywhere in Europe for 15 Cents, a call to any other phone for 22-25 Cents / minute in most countries.

Geneva offers free public wifi in many places including: Geneva's lakefront, La Perle du Lac, Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Parc de la Grange et Parc des Eaux-Vives, Plaine de Plainpalais & many more; for the full list, please visit: [Geneva wifi map \(pdf\)](#)

8) How and when register to courses in UNIGE?

Your study plan can be finalized once you are in Geneva, until approximately mid-October (exact date will be confirmed to you by the academic advisor). You can follow and drop different courses during this time. We recommend, however, to finalize your study plan as soon as possible, and not to wait until the last moment.

Your academic advisor at UNIGE must first validate your final study plan. Dual-track students must then have it validated by their academic advisor at their home university (not required to single-track students).

Registration to the courses is made in person at the Students' office.

G3S student's office location:

Uni Mail, Boulevard du Pont-d'Arve 40, 1205 Genève

Office 3279 (3rd floor)

Phone: +41 (0)22.379.80.00

Opening hours:

Monday: 10-12am and 1.30-3pm / Tuesday: 10-12 am / Wednesday: 10-12 am / Thursday: 10-12am and 1.30-3pm / Friday: closed

Your academic advisor:

Mr Mathieu Petite

T. +41 (0)22 379 80 07

GTI-Master@unige.ch Mathieu.Petite@unige.ch

9) Where do the MIHDS courses take place?

Most of the MIHDS courses will take place in these two buildings:

- [Uni Mail](#), Bd du Pont d'Arve 40, 1205 Genève (one of the main University buildings, G3S offices are located there)
- [SDG Solution Space](#), Campus Biotech Innovation Park, Avenue de Sécheron 15, 1202 Genève (most of the hands-on courses and specializations take place there)

10) What are the ISIs/ORISIS codes and how to obtain them?

ISIs (Infrastructure des Services d'Identification) account gives students and employees access to the UNIGE digital resources. UNIGE registration office will give you the details (account name and password) by post along with the registration fee payment slip before the beginning of the semester.

ORISIS is used by future UNIGE students who are still under registration process. You can create your own [ORISIS account here](#). It will allow you, for example, to apply for accommodation ([here](#)).

11) Am I allowed to work in Switzerland during my studies?

Students with European citizenship can work upon arrival in Switzerland (maximum 15 hours per week).

Students with non-European citizenship can work up to 15 hours per week only after residing in Switzerland for 6 months.

Estimated salary: student jobs generally pay from CHF 20 to CHF 30 an hour.

During holidays, exchange students can work full time (this varies according to the field of activity).

Contact and job opportunities: Uni-Emploi <https://www.unige.ch/dife/emploi/>

12) How much is the monthly cost of living in Geneva

Average monthly costs	Amount
Study costs	CHF 100.-
Health and Accident Insurance	Free with European Health Insurance Card starting from CHF 64.- onwards without European Health Insurance Card
RC Liability Insurance	CHF 80.- per year
Transportation	CHF 45.-/CHF 75.- (over 25 years old)
Rent	CHF 700.- (average)
Electricity / telephone	CHF 130.-
Food	CHF 600.-
Clothes/cultural activities/leisure	CHF 250.-
TOTAL	Approx. CHF 2000.-

Third-country nationals (non EU/EFTA) must have adequate financial resources to cover the duration of their stay. The adequacy of these financial resources shall be determined on the basis of the duration and purpose of the stay. The reference amount for students indicated by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration is CHF 30.- per day (<https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/einreise/faq.html>). When applying for a Swiss student residence permit, you are requested to provide information about your financial means. You should prove the ability to spend minimum CHF 11000.- during the year in Geneva.

13) Where to find the UNIGE Master IHDS study plan?

Here: http://wadme.unige.ch:3149/pls/opprg/w_rech_cours.debut

Search by Faculty (Faculté des Sciences de la Société, SDS), then select « Master of Science in Innovation, Human Development and Sustainability ». The study plan is usually updated a few weeks before the start of the semester and minor updates are done all along the academic year.

14) When does the fall/spring semester start in UNIGE?

Check the academic calendar of Geneva School of Social Sciences (G3S):

<https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/etudiants/horaires/>

Fall semester: mobility students have to attend an information session which takes place during the week preceding the official beginning of the semester, and have the possibility to attend the Welcome Days

(<https://www.unige.ch/etudiants/welcomedays/>).

In general, we recommend to be in Geneva during the first week of September: this will allow you to have enough time for the relocation formalities (residence permit, bank account, health insurance, etc.).



15) I'm going to study in China/Switzerland, where can I apply for scholarships?

- Chinese Government Scholarships: <http://www.campuschina.org/scholarships/index.html>
Applications usually start early February and shall be completed by March, the application to these scholarships for UNIGE students is managed by the [East-Asia Studies Department](#), contact Mrs Ping ZELLER-CHEN (ping.zeller-chen@unige.ch). If you're not Swiss, contact the Chinese Embassy or Consulate in your home country and inquire about the Chinese Government Scholarship application process, requirements and deadlines.
- Association Genève-Asie: <https://www.geneveasie.ch>
This association offers a few annual scholarships of CHF3000 each for students registered at UNIGE. The objective of these scholarships is to support students (BA or MA) whose work is likely to strengthen the links and relations between Geneva and Asia. The application file must contain a motivation letter, a project description, a budget and a formal recommendation letter from a teacher. For more information, please contact Prof. Samuel GUEX (Samuel.Guex@unige.ch).
- Heyning-Roelli Foundation : http://www.heyning-roelli-stiftung.ch/index_en.html
- Other foundations (e.g.: Rotary, Swiss Study Foundation, ...), check if your home country provides any funding opportunity.

16) Where can I take French classes during my studies in Geneva?

Intensive French courses during summer:

<https://www.unige.ch/international/en/incoming/international-non-erasmus-students/todolist/intensive-french-courses-guidelines/>

UNIGE "Maison des langues" organizes French classes for all levels: <http://mdl.unige.ch/coursetenseignements/francais/> (free for exchange students). Or you might try the [Tandem Program](#) (free) and advance at your own pace.

17) Can I be exempted from UNIGE tuition fees?

Exchange students are exempted from UNIGE tuition fees.

Students officially registered at UNIGE are required to pay a fee of CHF 500.- per semester. This fee is composed of a fixed administrative fee of CHF 65.- and a management fee of CHF 435.-. The management fee can be waived under certain conditions. In particular, students in difficult financial situations are welcome to apply for the fee waiver. Please pay particular attention to the two following points:

- 1) The request can only be submitted between 15 and 30 September.
- 2) The documents required to complete the request are either the last tax certificate (for the whole family if the student is still financially dependent; or the student themselves if they are financially independent) or, if the former is not available in your country, bank account statements or salary certificates.
- 3) All communications will be done through your UNIGE email (@etu.unige.ch), so remember to check it!

Detailed procedure and conditions: <https://www.unige.ch/dife/sante-social/aides-financieres/bourses/exo-taxes/>

These pages being in French only, do not hesitate to use an online open translation service to get a first understanding, and then feel free to contact the person in charge at the Admissions Office (exo-taxes@unige.ch, +41 22 379 77 41).