

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 Tsinghua, 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 to 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.

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

The Swiss visa 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).
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 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-Fri: 7h30am-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

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

Create an account and follow the instructions on the Accommodation Registration Portal of the University of Geneva: <https://www.logetud.ch>

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

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>
<https://comptoir-immo.ch/location/appartements-maisons/>
<https://www.rosset.ch/en/>
<http://www.buy-rent.ch/appartement-louer.html>

Other:
Graduate Institute student residence: <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/housing>
Webster Uni: <http://www.lesbergedurhone.com/index.html>
Anibis: <https://www.anibis.ch/fr/immobilier-immobilier-locations-geneve--418/advertlist.aspx>
Home.ch: <https://www.home.ch/en/>
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 international student, you are eligible for a reasonably priced health insurance with [ScoreStudies](#) (partnership negotiated with UNIGE). You are nevertheless free to choose any health and accident insurance provider that is recognized in Switzerland.

If you have private insurance, you can request recognition of its equivalence using the [Check form for the equivalence of Swiss health insurance 2018](#) (ENG/FR/GER). 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 require you to 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 does not engage the responsibility of the University of Geneva, check the exact conditions directly with the banks.

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

Banque Cantonale de Genève (BCGE)

<https://www.bcge.ch/en/jeunes>

POSTFINANCE

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

UBS

<https://www.ubs.com/ch/en/private/accounts-and-cards/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 is generally excellent in Switzerland. There are three main operators:

- Swisscom (partly owned by the Swiss Confederation),
- Salt
- 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 offers the best coverage, but this comes at a steeper price.

If you plan to use mostly data, [Lebara](#) offers inexpensive plans. On [Yallo](#), you can also obtain a cheap SIM.

Geneva offers free public Wi-Fi 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 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.

Registration to the courses is made online or in person at the Students' office. Please refer to the guidelines communicated by the academic advisor at the beginning of the semester.

[G3S students office:](#)



Uni Mail, Boulevard du Pont-d'Arve 40, 1205 Genève
Office 3279 (3rd floor)
Phone: +41 (0)22.379.80.00
secretariat-etudiants-sds@unige.ch
Opening hours: check on the [website](#)

Your academic advisor:

Ms Yali CHEN
T. +41 (0)22 379 89 66
GTI-Master@unige.ch
Yali.Chen@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](#).

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, 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: <https://pgc.unige.ch/main/home?year=2021>

Type: « 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/>

Students have the possibility to attend the [Welcome Days](#) to find out useful information about UNIGE's urban campus and prepare effectively the start of the academic year.

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 (CGS): <http://www.campuschina.org/scholarships/index.html>
Applications deadlines vary every year but most usually are at end of December, 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). Every year a limited number of CGS are granted to students studying at Swiss universities independently of their nationality. Competition to obtain these scholarships being relatively high in Switzerland, you may have better chances by contacting the Chinese Embassy or Consulate in your home country and inquire about the Chinese Government Scholarship application process, requirements and deadlines. At GTI, you may contact Giulia Brocco (giulia.brocco@unige.ch) for more information on CGS application procedure.
- 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).
- For Single-Degree students only: Heyning-Roelli Foundation, http://www.heyning-roelli-stiftung.ch/index_en.html
- Other foundations (e.g.: Rotary, Swiss Study Foundation, ...), do not forget to 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/lettres/elcf/coursete/en/>

UNIGE "[Maison des langues](#)" organizes French classes for all levels during the year (free for exchange students).

You may also 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 a difficult financial situation 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/aides-financieres/exo-taxes>

These pages being in French only, you can use an online translation service (e.g. Google Translate) 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).