

Studying in Switzerland offers transformative academic and personal experiences. However, if you aren't of Swiss nationality, knowing the required authorizations to be obtained and how can be complex. This guide aims to provide valuable insight and practical advice to help you navigate the process.

To live and study in Fribourg there are 3 key criteria as denoted below to be aware of; these are covered in sections 1-3 of this guide accordingly.

- Obtain entry visa (as applies)
- Obtain residency permit
- Register with the local Commune

Service de la Population et des Migrants (SPoMi)

The SPoMi is the local authority in Fribourg in charge of immigration. The University of Fribourg maintains a strong collaboration with the SPoMi relating to visa applications, benefiting all applicants. Please note:

- Refrain from contacting the SPoMi once an application is submitted - this will only delay processing.
- The SPoMi does not issue certificates stating that an application is in progress.
- Any attachments sent by e-mail must not be sent a second time by post unless specifically required to do so. If necessary, the SPoMi will contact the student.
- The SPoMi is only responsible for foreign nationals living in the canton of Fribourg. If a student does not live or intend to live in the Canton of Fribourg, students must contact the relevant cantonal authority directly.

Students requiring a visa, resolving visa issues or responding to enquiries should collaborate with the SPoMi directly or through a qualified immigration lawyer. To optimize the outcome for all parties involved, if applicants want to use the support of past or current students they should consult with the Executive & Academic Director before taking any action.

1- ENTRY VISA REQUIREMENTS

Disclaimer: Whether a visa will be granted is solely at the discretion of the Swiss authorities; students may not be granted a visa depending on the current geopolitical climate. In this case, we propose that you take the option to study online.

1.1 EU¹/ EFTA² Countries

No entry requirements apply to Schengen countries.

1.2 Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Japan, Malaysia and United Kingdom Students

These countries have visa-free entry access into Switzerland; however, other action applies prior to entry:

Australia: [LINK](#)

New Zealand: [LINK](#)

Singapore: [LINK](#)

Japan: [LINK](#)

¹ A list of current EU countries is found here: [EU country profiles | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)

² A list of current EFTA countries is found here: [The European Free Trade Association | European Free Trade Association \(efta.int\)](#)

Malaysia: [LINK](#)

United Kingdom: [LINK](#)

1.3 All other Countries

Students from all other countries must obtain a National Visa "D" to enter Switzerland. The visa application process involves both the Swiss embassy or consulate abroad (hereafter referred to as 'Swiss embassy abroad') which handles immigration services for your country; and in Switzerland the Ministry of Foreign Affairs located in Bern and the SPoMi in Fribourg.

!! The application process is long and varies depending on the country. ***Students in the countries requiring a visa must start the process a minimum of 4-5 months before the semester is due to begin.***

Important: Requirements differ depending on the residency and nationality of the applicant; be sure to follow the specific requirements for your country without deviation.

1.3.1. Submitting the Visa Application File to the Swiss Embassy Abroad

The visa application file must first be submitted to the Swiss embassy abroad³ which will review the documentation for completeness and correctness. Note: Switzerland does not have representation in every country; in this case, you must complete the process with a neighbouring country as indicated below.

Find your country below and click on the related [LINK](#) which explains the requirements to follow including the documentation to be completed and submitted. Where there is more than one country in the grouping, you **MUST** go to the Swiss embassy of the first country listed (in green) to submit the application file – the Swiss embassy of the country highlighted in green represents the other countries denoted.

AFRICA REGION

East Africa

- **Kenya**, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia: [LINK](#)
- Tanzania: [LINK](#)
- **Democratic Republic of Congo**, Congo, Gabon: [LINK](#)
- **Ethiopia**, South Sudan and Djibouti: [LINK](#)
- **Madagascar**, The Comoros and The Seychelles: [LINK](#)

North Africa

- Egypt: [LINK](#)
- Algeria: [LINK](#)
- Morocco: [LINK](#)
- **Tunisia**, Libya: [LINK](#)

³ See [HERE](#) for Swiss embassies abroad

Southern Africa

- **South Africa**, Angola, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Malawi, Western Sahara, and Namibia: [LINK](#)

West Africa

- **Nigeria**, Chad, Niger: [LINK](#)
- **Ghana**, Benin, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo: [LINK](#)
- **Cameroon**, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic: [LINK](#)
- **Senegal**, Mali, Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde: [LINK](#)
- **Ivory Coast**, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone: [LINK](#)

ASIA REGION

- **China**, North Korea: [LINK](#)
- **India**, Bhutan: [LINK](#)
- **Sri Lanka**, Maldives: [LINK](#)
- **Nepal**: [LINK](#)
- **Thailand**, Cambodia, Myanmar: [LINK](#)
- **Vietnam**: [LINK](#)
- **Bangladesh**: [LINK](#)
- **Indonesia**, Timor Leste: [LINK](#)
- **Philippines**: [LINK](#)
- **South Korea**: [LINK](#)
- **Kazakhstan**, Tajikistan: [LINK](#)
- **Kyrgyzstan**: [LINK](#)
- **Pakistan**, Afghanistan: [LINK](#)
- **Georgia**, Armenia: [LINK](#)
- **Azerbaijan**, Turkmenistan: [LINK](#)
- **Brunei Darussalam**: [LINK](#)
- **Iran**: [LINK](#)
- **Jordan**, Iraq: [LINK](#)
- **United Arab Emirates**, Bahrain: [LINK](#)
- **Palestine**: [LINK](#)
- **Saudi Arabia**, Yemen: [LINK](#)

- Turkey: [LINK](#)
- Qatar: [LINK](#)
- Lebanon, Syria: [LINK](#)
- Russia, Uzbekistan: [LINK](#)

AMERICAS REGION

North America

- Antigua and Barbuda, Dominican Republic, Dominica, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis: [LINK](#)
- Canada, The Bahamas: [LINK](#)
- Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama El Salvador: [LINK](#)
- Cuba, Jamaica: [LINK](#)
- Mexico, Belize: [LINK](#)
- United States of America: [LINK](#)

South America

- Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay: [LINK](#)
- Peru, Bolivia: [LINK](#)
- Brazil: [LINK](#)
- Chile: [LINK](#)
- Colombia: [LINK](#)
- Ecuador: [LINK](#)
- Papua New Guinea, Fiji Islands, Vanuatu: [LINK](#)
- Venezuela, Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, Santa Lucia, Grenada, Guatemala, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines: [LINK](#)

1.3.2. Additional SPoMi Requirements

Once the Swiss embassy abroad is satisfied all requirements are met, the application file is forwarded to Switzerland⁴ via diplomatic mail. It is then transferred to the SPoMi in Fribourg⁵. The SPoMi reviews the file and determines whether or not to grant and issue the visa.

The SPoMi often has additional document requirements beyond those of the embassy abroad, so make sure you already have these prepared and available timely to provide immediately upon request. These documents fall into one of the following 3 categories and MUST be translated into French.

- Documents concerning the applicant
- Evidence of economic means

⁴ The application file is sent to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) in Bern who acts as an intermediary with the cantons.

⁵ The SPoMi for Fribourg is located at: Rte d'Englisberg 11, 1763 Granges-Paccot, Switzerland.

- Payment of processing fee

1.3.2.1. Documents Concerning the Applicant

All of the following documents must be provided (certified translation is required where denoted by *):

- a) CV
- b) Letter of motivation
- c) Letter*
 - indicating why it is important for you to follow this particular LLM in Switzerland (rather than a program in your own country or elsewhere in the world)
 - also, a description of the courses that you will follow
- d) Declaration that you will leave Switzerland at the end of your studies
- e) Copies of all university diplomas and grade transcripts*. (Note: for some countries in Africa, the SPoMi requires that the diplomas be authenticated by the Swiss embassy abroad. Therefore, Students from Africa should contact the Swiss embassy abroad to find out whether this procedure exists and how long it takes to avoid any unnecessary delay)

1.3.2.2. Evidence of Economic Means

You must provide only ONE of the following (translation to French is not mandated):

- a) Bank account statement in your name (any other e.g., parents, relatives or friends will be rejected) showing an amount of at least CHF 21'900 (can be denoted in local currency). Note: you do not need to transfer this money to Switzerland, but it must be available to demonstrate you have sufficient financial means available.

This statement must be issued by:

- a bank in your country of origin (i.e. where you are resident), that is recognized by Switzerland's independent financial markets regulator authority, FINMA ([LINK](#)). Include the FINMA list with your bank, clearly highlighted for ease of reference by the SPoMi.

or

- a bank affiliated to a bank authorized in Switzerland (confirm this with the bank manager to be sure). For example, your bank is Société Générale Cameroun, on the FINMA list the affiliated bank is SOCIETE GENERALE Private Banking (Suisse) SA.

In this case, you provide the bank statement from your bank and in your supporting letter you clearly state that your bank is affiliated with [bank name] on the FINMA list and attach a copy of the FINMA list with this affiliated bank highlighted.

If neither of these fit your circumstances, then you must open an account with a bank listed by FINMA or with a bank affiliated to one on the list.

Attention: if you submit a statement that is not from a bank on the FINMA list or is affiliated with one, then SPoMi will respond that your bank statement does not conform.

- b) Letter of support by a Swiss bank.

- c) Letter of support from a Swiss national or holder of a Swiss permanent residence permit; as well as documentary evidence of regular income and their latest tax declaration.
- d) Evidence of a scholarship covering living expenses in Switzerland.

1.3.2.3. SPoMi Processing Fee

The SPoMi will only start to process your application once a non-refundable processing fee of CHF 95 is paid. This fee must be paid as follows:

Compte postal CCP: 17-1691-7
 IBAN CH15 0900 0000 1700 1691 7
 BIC/SWIFT-Code: POFICHBE

You must reference your name and date of birth on the payment.

The bank making the payment on your behalf will also need the address for the recipient; this is:

Swisspost-Postfinance, Nordring 8, 3030 Bern Service de la population et des migrants, Rte d'Englisberg11, 1763 Granges-Paccot.

1.4 Working in Switzerland and Social Welfare

Restrictions apply to work permits⁶ and the ability to obtain social welfare, particularly for students from outside the EU and EFTA countries. Students are ineligible for social welfare benefits⁷, and work permit applications are restricted during the initial six months of their academic program. Further, work permits are contingent upon academic performance, verified through the submission of transcripts, and are limited to 15 hours per week for student employment.

Any student who works without a work permit, or attempts to obtain social welfare or a work permit during the first 6 months poses the risk of visa and residence permit revocation.

Additionally, students who hold funds via the FINMA bank account or equivalent must maintain sufficient funds and be prepared to furnish a bank statement as proof if requested by the authorities. Also see 1.3.2.2. above.

2- OBTAINING THE RESIDENCY PERMIT

All non-Swiss must obtain a residency permit from the SPoMi irrespective of their country of origin.

Typically, the L permit is issued which is for short-stay and will need to be renewed if required longer than the granted duration. Processing time is approximately 10 working days from the time of submission of the required documentation, assuming all required elements are provided and are correct.

Upon arrival in Switzerland, students must submit their residency permit application to the SPoMi office within 14 days. This can be done via postal mail providing the following:

⁶ Internships follow different requirements, please consult Executive & Academic Director.

⁷ Exceptions may apply depending on the type of permit granted.

EU / EFTA Students	Non-EU/EFTA students
<p>Documents to be submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Residency Permit Application Form • Recent passport photo * • Copy of passport bio-data page or identity card * • Copy of the page where the stamp was made by Customs upon entry into Switzerland (colour copy preferred) • Original copy of the certificate of registration at the University of Fribourg (contact iblstudentaffairs@unifr.ch for this) <p>* colour copy preferred</p>	<p>For non-EU/EFTA students you must provide <u>additionally</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original copy of approved National Visa D • Learning agreement, duration of studies and plans after graduation • Proof of economic means – this can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmation from bank authorised in Switzerland of sufficient assets - 21,900 Swiss francs (see 1.3.2.2. above); or - Sufficient scholarship or educational loan; or - Declaration of commitment from a solvent person resident in Switzerland (fill in the form "Déclaration d'engagement en vue d'études").
<p>For the current cost of the permit, see Unifr website HERE</p>	

Once the SPoMi receive the application, students are sent an invoice and given an appointment for the capture of biometric data. The residence permit will only be issued when the biometric data is provided and the invoice paid.

Once the application is finalized, the SPoMi will then issue the permit. It typically takes 5-10 days to receive the permit which will be sent to your Fribourg address.

The residency permit is renewable annually for up to 8 years (this is contingent upon the student's continued enrolment in the program). A fee must be paid to the SPoMi for any subsequent renewal.

3- REGISTRATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNE

All Swiss residents must be registered with their local commune. If you have newly moved into a Swiss commune, you must go to the local commune office to register within 90 days from the date of arrival in Switzerland. You must provide the following:

- a) Residence permit
- b) Proof of address in the commune
- c) Proof of health insurance valid in Switzerland
- d) Pay a fee of approx. 20 CHF

See the Unifr website for address information for the commune offices: [LINK](#)

Disclaimer: These guidelines provided here above are for informational purposes only and do not constitute legal advice. While efforts are made to ensure accuracy, visa regulations and requirements may change frequently and without prior notice. The visa application process and its outcome are ultimately the responsibility of the applicant. It is recommended that applicants consult official embassy or consulate websites or seek professional legal advice for comprehensive and current information regarding visa applications and requirements.