Visa and Residence Permit - Guidelines

for International Bachelor's and Master's Degree Students

Have you been admitted to a full-time degree program at SBS Swiss Business School? The following guidelines will help you complete the immigration formalities. Please follow them carefully.

1. Do you need a visa?

The first step is to find out whether you need a visa to enter Switzerland. Citizens of the following EU or EFTA countries and nationals of Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the UK (even after January 1, 2021) are exempt from the visa requirement:[1]

EU countries: *Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden*

EFTA countries: *Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway*

Nationals of all other countries must apply for a visa at the Swiss embassy or consulate responsible for their place of residence.[2] If you are unsure whether you need a visa, please contact your local Swiss representation.

Please note that it normally **takes 6-12 weeks to obtain a visa.**

Schengen visas from other states:

Although Switzerland has signed the Schengen/Dublin Agreement, a Schengen visa from another state entitles the holder only to enter and travel through Switzerland, not to take up residence. Taking up residence requires a national “D” visa.

2. Procedure for students who do not require a visa

If you are a national of an EU or EFTA country, you do not need to obtain a visa before entering Switzerland. However, you must register and apply for a residence permit at the Residents’ Registration Office after arrival (see the box on page 2).

Nationals of Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the UK do not require visas to enter Switzerland. However, to obtain a residence permit, they must submit the same documents (except the visa application form) as students who require a visa. The difference is that they can submit these documents at the Residents’ Registration Office after arrival and then obtain their residence permit directly.

[1] This list is not complete, and entry requirements can change at any time. For the latest information, please see https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/publiservice/weisungen-kreisschreiben/visa/liste1_staatsangehoerigkeit.html

[2] A list of the addresses of all Swiss representations abroad can be found at https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/representations-and-travel-advice.html. Please note that visa applications must be submitted to an embassy or a consulate general (not a consulate).

Applying for your residence permit (EU/EFTA citizens):

You must apply for your residence permit at the Residents' Registration Office responsible for your place of residence within 14 days of arrival.

Bring a copy of your SBS Enrollment Letter, your passport, and proof of sufficient financial means. For EU and EFTA citizens, this is normally only a written declaration of support from a family member or a written guarantee from a Swiss resident that living expenses during the stay in Switzerland will be covered. Citizens of Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the UK require the same financial proof as students who require a visa.

A few weeks after you have submitted your documents, you will receive an invitation to collect your residence permit. The permit is usually valid for one year, but it can be extended if your studies take longer. Please note that you must submit updated proof of sufficient financial means for each extension.

3. Procedure for students who require a visa

Your visa application must be accompanied by all the documents listed below. This list was prepared by SBS in cooperation with the Canton of Zurich Migration Office and meets official requirements. Please note that a missing document may cause a delay of several weeks. If your local Swiss embassy requests any additional documents, include these as well.

To study, you require a national "D" visa. This visa is valid for three months only and permits you to enter Switzerland once. After entering Switzerland, you will receive a residence permit, which also allows you to travel within the Schengen area for up to three months in every half-year.

4. Visa application documents (to be handed in at the nearest Swiss embassy or consulate general)

- **Cover sheet for visa application (recommended)**

Please use the checklist on the SBS website or the one provided by your program manager or admissions manager as the cover sheet for your visa application. It will help you ensure that you have included all the requested documents and enable the Swiss authorities to locate relevant information more quickly.

- **Visa application form**

The visa application form is provided free of charge by your local Swiss representation or can be downloaded from the internet in PDF format.[3] It must normally be submitted in triplicate. Most representations require you to appear in person; please check this in advance. **Please note that a student visa is normally valid starting two to three weeks before the start of the semester.** If you wish to enter Switzerland earlier, you must mention this in your visa application and provide detailed reasons.

[3] https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/einreise/visumantragsformular.html (Important: Select "National type D visa application form.")

- **Passport**

Provide a copy of the first few relevant pages of your passport. Your passport must be valid for at least three months beyond the planned duration of your stay. **This is very important: your visa will not be approved if your passport expires earlier.**

- **Passport photographs**

Three recent passport photographs

- **SBS Swiss Business School confirmation of enrollment**

Enclose the official SBS "Confirmation of Enrollment" document, which you will receive from the SBS Admissions Office once you have paid the administration fee. Please note that the letter entitled "Acceptance Letter" is not sufficient to obtain a visa.

- **Curriculum vitae / language skills**

Provide a curriculum vitae in tabular form in German or English, listing your language skills in detail.

- **Copy of your bachelor's diploma (master's program students only)**

Provide a copy and a certified translation into German or English. Please note that some embassies require you to present the original diplomas. Please check with the embassy **before** sending your original documents to the SBS Admissions Office.

- **Letter of motivation / reasons for studying in Switzerland**

Please provide a written personal statement explaining why you wish to study in the Canton of Zurich. Keep it short; a few sentences are sufficient.

- **Evidence of sufficient financial means**

You must provide evidence that you can finance your stay in Switzerland by submitting a bank statement or proof of a scholarship award. The Canton of Zurich Migration Office **only accepts bank statements from banks domiciled in Switzerland**[4] (a Swiss bank or a foreign bank with a branch in Switzerland). You must show that you have **CHF 21,000.00** available. **The account must be in your own name** (not your parents'), and the account balance must be stated in Swiss francs, euros, or US dollars, either on the bank statement or in an additional letter from the bank.

Financial evidence (bank statement):

Even large, internationally active banks are not acceptable if they have no branches in Switzerland. Examples of acceptable banks include Citibank, China Construction Bank, HSBC, and Deutsche Bank. Please do **not** choose Raiffeisen Bank. Although it is on the list, it has never been accepted.

The Zurich Migration Office is extremely strict about the financial requirement, and this is where students make the most mistakes. It is crucial that you follow the instructions above very carefully. Most embassies do not know the detailed requirements of each of Switzerland's 26 cantons and may not be able to provide the correct requirements.

Letters from parents declaring financial support are NOT accepted.

For students who have relatives in Switzerland, an alternative is to submit a "guarantee declaration."[5]

[4] Please see https://www.finma.ch/en/~/media/finma/dokumente/bewilligungstraeger/pdf/beh.pdf?la=en for a list of banks with branches in Switzerland

[5] This means that a financially solvent resident of Switzerland (a Swiss citizen or a foreign national with a B or C permit) guarantees to cover your living expenses up to CHF 21,000.00, any expenses incurred as a result of accidents or illness, and your return trip. The appropriate form will be sent to your home address by the Migration Office of the Canton of Zurich once it has received your visa application.

- **Confirmation of tuition fee payment (if required by the embassy)**

Many embassies require confirmation of tuition fee payment.

The Zurich Migration Office may require students from a small number of countries to provide a rental contract for accommodation in Switzerland. If you are a national of one of these countries, the Migration Office will let you know once it has reviewed your visa application. You do not need to submit a rental contract at the time of your visa application.

1.1 What happens next?

Your student visa application will be forwarded to the responsible authorities in Switzerland for a decision. The Migration Office of the respective canton reserves the right to request additional documents and information. You will be notified as soon as your visa is ready for collection.

Please be aware that admission to SBS Swiss Business School does not automatically mean that the Migration Office will grant you a visa. **Under no circumstances should you enter Switzerland with a tourist visa.**

Reasons for visa refusal:

Please note that there is no guarantee that a visa will be granted. The decision rests solely with the responsible migration office.

- Visa applications from students over the age of 30 are usually refused. The legal basis can be found here (Migrationsamt des Kantons Zürich > Aus- und Weiterbildung aus Drittstaaten; in German only).
- Visa applications from students who already hold a degree at the intended level may also be rejected.

1.2 Costs

You will pay three different fees during the visa application process: consular fees when you apply for a visa; a fee of CHF 95.00 to the Swiss canton responsible for your visa application for the visa authorization document; and a fee of CHF 182.00 for the residence permit when you register at the Residents' Registration Office ("Kreisbüro") in Zurich.

Applying for your residence permit (non-EU/EFTA citizens):

A residence permit is essential for studying in Switzerland. Together with your passport, this permit also entitles you to enter any Schengen state without an additional visa. You must apply for the residence permit **in person** at the Residents' Registration Office ("Kreisbüro") in the district where you live **within 14 days of your arrival** in Switzerland. Bring your SBS Enrollment Letter, your rental contract, and your passport. Since 2011, biometric data have also been recorded for non-EU/EFTA citizens.

Please note that, for non-EU/EFTA citizens, **the entire period of study in Switzerland may not exceed eight years.** This period covers undergraduate and graduate degrees and any postdoctoral period. You will be invited to collect your permit within a few weeks of submitting your documents to the "Kreisbüro." The permit is normally valid for one year and can be renewed if your studies take longer.

Please note that every extension must be accompanied by proof of financial means amounting toat least CHF 21,000.00.

2. Additional information

2.1 Employment in the Canton of Zurich

During the semester, you may undertake paid employment for a maximum of 15 hours per week. During the lecture-free period, you may work up to 100% of full-time hours. In both cases, **all non-EU/EFTA students must have a work permit, which can only be obtained after the residence permit has been issued.**

This document is provided for informational purposes only. No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of this information. Rules and regulations may have changed. For legally binding information, please contact the relevant authorities.