

Visa and Residence Permit Guidelines for International Master's (MSc) Degree Students

Have you been admitted to a Master's degree programme at ETH Zurich? The below guidelines will help you to complete the immigration formalities. For further information please see <https://www.ethz.ch/en/studies/international-immigration-housing.html>

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, and Singapore are exempted from the visa obligation:¹

EU countries: *Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, 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 domicile.² If you are unsure whether or not you need a visa, please ask at the local Swiss representation office.

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

Important: Although Switzerland has signed the Schengen/Dublin agreement, a Schengen visa from another state continues to entitle the holder only to enter and travel through Switzerland, not to take up residence. The latter requires a national "D" visa.

2. Procedure for students with no visa obligation

If you are a national of an EU or EFTA country, you do not need to obtain a visa before entering Switzerland. However, you are obliged to register and apply for a residence permit at the Residents' Registration Office ("Kreisbüro") at your new place of domicile within fourteen days of your arrival in Switzerland (**see box below**).

Nationals of Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore do not require visas to enter Switzerland. However, to obtain a residence permit they must submit the same documents as students who are subject to a visa obligation. The difference is that they need not wait for a visa decision in their home country; they are free to enter Switzerland.

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 with the addresses of all Swiss representations abroad can be found at <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs.html>. Please note that visa applications must be submitted to an embassy or a consulate general (not a consulate).

IMPORTANT

Even if you do not need a visa for your stay in Switzerland, you are still obliged to obtain a **residence permit** as soon as you arrive. You must apply for your residence permit at the Residents' Registration Office ("Kreisbüro") in charge of your place of domicile³ **within 14 days of arrival**.

Bring along a copy of your ETH Zurich matriculation confirmation, proof of sufficient financial means (For EU and EFTA citizens this is normally only a written declaration of support by 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 and Singapore require financial proof similar to that of students subject to a visa obligation), and your passport.

A few weeks after you have submitted your documents you will receive an invitation to pick up 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. Entry procedure for students subject to a visa obligation

Your visa application must be accompanied by **all** of the documents in the list below. This list was prepared by ETH in cooperation with the Canton of Zurich Migration Office and meets official requirements. Please note that if any document is missing this may generate a delay of several weeks. If the Swiss representation office where you live requests any additional documents, enclose these too. To study, you require a national "D" visa. This visa permits you to enter Switzerland once. After entry you will receive a residence permit for Switzerland, which also allows you to travel within the Schengen area for up to three months in every half-year.

- **Cover sheet for visa application (recommended)**
Please use the checklist on the ETH homepage⁴ as the cover sheet for your visa application. It will help you to ensure that you have included all the documents requested and enable the Swiss authorities to locate relevant information more quickly.
- **Authorisation ("Vollmacht") (highly recommended!)**
With this document you authorise ETH Zurich, if indicated, to get information from the Migration Office of the Canton of Zurich regarding the progress of your entry application. Please note that this document does not mean that ETH can speed up the process. Please fill in Appendix 3, sign it and submit it to the embassy with your visa application.
- **Visa application form**
The visa application form is provided free of charge by the local Swiss representation where you live, or can be downloaded from the internet in PDF format.⁵ Normally it must be submitted in triplicate. Most representations require you to appear in person; please find out about this in advance. **Please note that a student visa is normally valid from 2-3 weeks before the start of the semester. If you wish to enter Switzerland earlier than this you must mention this in your visa application and provide detailed reasons.**
- **Passport**
Copy of the first few (relevant) pages of your passport. Your passport must be valid for at least 3 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**
3 current passport photographs

³ In the city of Zurich this office is called a "Kreisbüro" ("Residents' Registration Office"); in other cities it is called an "Einwohnerkontrolle". Every city district has a "Kreisbüro" which is responsible for registering all persons living in that district. Please see <https://www.ethz.ch/en/studies/international-immigration-housing/residence-permit.html>

⁴ <https://www.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/main/education/internationales/pdf-en/checklist-visa-master.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/einreise/visumantragsformular.html> (Important: Select "Long-term stays (more than 3 months)".)

- **ETH Zurich confirmation of registration**
Enclose the official ETH “Confirmation of Registration” and “Matriculation Confirmation” (“Bescheinigung zu Händen der zuständigen Behörden“) documents which you received from the Admissions Office. Please note that the letter entitled “Admission to Master’s Programme” is not normally sufficient to obtain a visa.
- **Curriculum vitae / language skills**
Curriculum vitae in table form in German or English; list language skills in detail. See the example in Appendix 1.
- **Diplomas / transcripts of school records**
Copies and certified translations into German or English.
- **Letter of motivation / future plans**
Please provide (in German if possible) a (short) written personal statement in which you declare
 - 1) The reasons why you wish to study in Switzerland. Mention that the ETH Master’s degree programme is the next logical step after your Bachelor’s degree, and why it is important for your professional future.
 - 2) Outline your plans after completing your studies.
- **Evidence of sufficient financial means**
You must produce evidence that you can finance your stay in Switzerland, for example bank statements and/or proof of scholarship decisions. The Canton of Zurich Migration Office requires confirmation from a bank domiciled in Switzerland (a Swiss bank or a foreign bank with a branch in Switzerland⁶) that at the beginning of your stay and at the start of every extension you have funds available to you amounting to CHF 21,000.00. **The account must be in your name 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. PLEASE NOTE: Even large, internationally active banks are not acceptable if they have no branches in Switzerland! Examples of acceptable banks are Citibank, HSBC, Deutsche Bank (etc.). Please do NOT choose Raiffeisen Bank, although it is on the list it has never been accepted. Letters from parents declaring financial support are not accepted either.**

An alternative is to submit a so-called “**guarantee declaration**”.⁷
- **Commitment to leave Switzerland on completing your studies**
You must provide a written confirmation (in German or English) that you will leave Switzerland when you complete your studies. Please see the sample letter in Appendix 2.
- **Confirmation of tuition fee payment (if required by the embassy)**
Many embassies require a confirmation of tuition fee payment. However, at ETH it is not possible to pay fees in advance. The letter found at <https://www.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/main/education/internationales/pdf-en/confirmation-tuition-fees.pdf> confirms this. Please print it and enclose it with your visa application if required.

Procedure

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

Please be aware that admission to ETH Zurich does not automatically imply that the Migration Office will grant you a visa. **Under no circumstances should you enter Switzerland with a tourist visa!**

Costs

You will pay three different fees during the visa procedure: fees to the consulate when you apply for a

⁶ 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.

⁷ This means that a solvent resident of Switzerland (Swiss citizen or foreigner with B or C permit) guarantees to cover your living expenses up to CHF 21,000.00, any expenses incurred through accidents and 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 they have received your visa application.

visa; a fee of CHF 95.00 to the Swiss canton responsible for your visa application (in this case the Zurich Migration Office) for the visa authorisation document; and a fee of CHF 162.00 for the residence permit when you register at the Residents' Registration Office ("Kreisbüro") in Zurich.

IMPORTANT

To study in Switzerland **a residence permit is essential**. This permit and your passport also entitle 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**. Remember to bring your ETH confirmation of matriculation 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 studies in Switzerland may not exceed 8 years**. This period covers undergraduate and graduate degrees and any post-doctorate period.

You will be invited to collect your permit within a few weeks of presenting 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 to at least CHF 21,000.00.**

4. Additional information

Employment in the Canton of Zurich

During the semester you are allowed to undertake paid employment for a maximum of 15 hours per week. During the semester break you may work up to 100%. **In both cases all international students must have a work permit, which can only be obtained after the residence permit has been issued.** For further information see

<http://www.awa.zh.ch/internet/volkswirtschaftsdirektion/awa/en/home.html>.

Useful links

- State Secretariat for Migration: <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home.html>
- Canton of Zurich Migration Office: <http://www.ma.zh.ch/internet/sicherheitsdirektion/migrationsamt/de/service/international.html>
- Cantonal and communal authorities address list: https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/adressen_kantone_und.html
- Information for Master's degree students at ETH Zurich: <https://www.ethz.ch/en/studies/prospective-masters-degree-students.html>
- Housing Office of ETH and the University Zurich: http://www.wohnen.ethz.ch/index_EN
- Health insurance requirements in Switzerland: <https://www.ethz.ch/en/studies/international-immigration-housing/health-insurance.html>

APPENDIX 1**Sample CV for students subject to a visa obligation**

Curriculum Vitae	
Personal information	
Surname	Zhang
First name(s)	Xu Example
Address	P.O. Box 1325, YuQuan Campus Jiaotong University 200070 Shanghai V.R. China phone: 0086-00-00000000 email: example@yahoo.com
Date of birth	30 May 1983
Place of birth	Hangzhou
Nationality	China
Marital status	Single
Parents' occupation	Father: Bank employee Mother: Bus driver
Education	
09/1989-07/1994	Hubei Area Primary School, Zhabei district, Shanghai
09/1994-07/2001	Shibei Secondary School, Shanghai: lower and upper grades
09/2001-07/2005	Bachelor's programme in Mechanical Engineering and Automation (Design and Manufacturing), Jiaotong University, Shanghai
1 July 2005	Degree: Bachelor of Science in Engineering
Professional experience	
06/2003-09/2003	3-month internship at ABB Shanghai Motors Co., Shanghai
Language skills	
Chinese:	Mother tongue
English:	Fluent (TOEFL score: 660, paper version; IELTS score: 8)
German:	Good (Zertifikat Deutsch, Goethe-Institut Beijing)
Computer skills	
Excellent computer skills (MS Office, Photoshop)	

Place, date, signature

APPENDIX 2

Sample of declaration to leave Switzerland upon completion of studies for students subject to a visa obligation

Name

Address

Place, date

**Declaration of *X*, born on *dd.mm.yyyy*, to leave Switzerland upon completion of studies at
ETH
Zurich**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have been admitted to the Master's degree programme in *X* at ETH Zurich. My studies start on *X* and will presumably last until *X*.

I hereby confirm that I will leave Switzerland immediately after completing my studies at ETH Zurich. Upon my return to *X* I intend to take up work at *X*.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 3

Authorisation (“Vollmacht”)

Student’s name and address:

Place and date:

Vollmacht

Hiermit ermächtige ich folgende Person an der ETH Zürich, mich im fremdenpolizeilichen Einreiseverfahren zu vertreten:

ETH Zürich
International Student Support
Annina Wanner
HG F 22.3
Rämistrasse 101
8092 Zürich

Authorisation

I hereby authorise the following person at ETH Zurich to act for me in the visa procurement procedure:

ETH Zurich
International Student Support
Annina Wanner
HG F 22.3
Rämistrasse 101
8092 Zurich

Unterschrift / Signature:
