

Visa and Residence Permit – Guidelines for International Master Students

Have you been admitted to a Master Programme at ETH Zurich? These guidelines should help you handle the immigration formalities correctly. Please consult the following websites for further information:

http://www.rektorat.ethz.ch/students/immigration/index_EN

1. Is a visa necessary?

First of all, please check whether or not 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, 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 competent for their usual place of residence.² If you are unsure whether or not you need a visa, please ask at the local Swiss representation office.

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

Important: Although Switzerland is an associated member of the Schengen/Dublin agreement, a Schengen visa from another state only entitles its holder to enter and travel through Switzerland, but not to take up residence. To do so, you need a national “D” visa.

2. Procedure for students without 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 at the Citizens’ Registry Office (“Kreisbüro”) at your new place of residence within fourteen days of your arrival in Switzerland and apply for a residence permit (**see grey box below**).

Nationals of **Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore** do not require a visa to enter Switzerland. But they must submit the same documents as those students who do require a visa to obtain a residence permit. The difference is that they do not have to wait in their home country for a decision to be taken regarding the visa; they are free to enter Switzerland.

IMPORTANT:

Even though 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 Municipal Office (“Kreisbüro”) in charge of your place of residence³ **within 14 days of arrival**. You must produce proof of being registered at ETH Zurich, **proof of having sufficient financial means (usually for EU and EFTA citizens a letter written by a family member or a warranty written by a person living in Switzerland explicitly stating that they will cover your living expenses during your stay in Switzerland is adequate; Citizens from Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore must produce a document confirming their financial means similar to that required by students with visa obligation)** and your passport. A few weeks later an official letter will be sent to your residential address in Switzerland requesting you to pick up your residence permit. The permit is usually valid for one year. You can apply for an extension should your studies take longer.

¹ Although we make every effort to keep this list up-to-date, the entry requirements can change at any time. For the latest information, please consult http://www.bfm.admin.ch/content/dam/data/migration/rechtsgrundlagen/weisungen_und_kreis schreiben/weisungen_visa/bfm-anhoeliste1_vorschriften-nach-staat-e.pdf

² A list with the addresses of all Swiss representations abroad can be found at <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/ reps.html>
Please note that visa applications must be submitted to an embassy or a consulate general (not a consulate).

³ In the city of Zurich, this office is called a “Kreisbüro”, in other cities it is called “Einwohnerkontrolle”. There is a “Kreisbüro” in every city district responsible for registering all the citizens living in that particular district. Please check http://www.rektorat.ethz.ch/students/immigration/residence_permit/index_EN

3. Procedure for students with visa obligation

Your visa application must be supported by all of the documents listed below. This list has been prepared by ETH in cooperation with the Canton of Zurich Migration Office and meets the official requirements. Please note that missing documents may cause a delay of several weeks. Any additional documents requested by the Swiss representation office at your place of residence must also be enclosed. Students require a national "D" visa. This visa permits you to enter Switzerland once and to take up residency in the canton of Zurich

- **Cover sheet to visa application (optional)**
Please use the checklist on the ETH homepage⁴ as a cover sheet for your visa application. This helps to ensure you have included all the requested documents and it also helps the Swiss authorities when handling your dossier.
- **Authorisation (highly recommended!)**
This document authorises ETH Zurich to get information about your visa application from the Migration Office of the Canton of Zurich. Please note that this document does not mean that ETH can speed up the process. Please fill in appendix 3, sign it and hand it in to the embassy with your visa application.
- **Visa application form**
The visa application form is provided free of charge by the local Swiss representation at your place of residence. Alternatively, it can be downloaded from the internet in PDF format.⁵ Usually, it must be submitted in triplicate. Most representations request you to present yourself in person, so please make sure in advance whether or not this is the case.
- **Passport**
Copy of the first few (relevant) pages of your passport. Your passport must be valid for at least 3 months over the planned duration of your stay.
- **Passport-size pictures**
3 recent passport-size pictures
- **Confirmation of registration at ETH Zurich**
Please enclose the official ETH letter "Confirmation of Registration" and the "Matriculation Confirmation", which you have received from the ETH Admissions Office. Please note that the letter entitled "Admission to Master Programme" usually does not suffice to obtain a visa.
- **Curriculum vitae / foreign language skills**
Personal data sheet in German or English, provided with your signature. Foreign language skills must be listed in detail. Please see appendix 1 for an example.
- **Diplomas / certificates of present and previous studies**
Copies and officially certified translations in German or English.
- **Letter of motivation / future plans**
Please write, if possible in German, a personal (short!) statement in which you declare the following:
1) The reasons why you want to study in Switzerland. Do also mention that the ETH Master programme is the next logical step in your studies following your Bachelor degree, and why the Master programme is important for your professional future.
2) Outline your future plans upon completing your studies.
- **Evidence of sufficient financial means**
You must produce evidence of sufficient financial means to support your stay in Switzerland. You can do this by providing bank statements and/or scholarship awards. The Canton of Zurich Migration Office requires confirmation from a bank with a branch in Switzerland (foreign bank with a branch in Switzerland⁶). As a rule, you should be able to provide evidence of having CHF 21'000 at the beginning of each year of your studies. **The account must be registered in your own name and the currency must be Swiss Francs, Euros or US Dollars. Please note: Even big and internationally well-known banks are not accepted if they do not have a branch in Switzerland.**

⁴ http://www.rektorat.ethz.ch/students/immigration/procedure_visu/index_EN

⁵ <http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/themen/einreise/visumantragsformular.html>

⁶ Please check http://www.finma.ch/institute/pdf_e/ebeh.pdf for a list of banks with branches in Switzerland

Alternatively, you can hand in a so-called “**guarantee declaration**”.⁷

➤ **Commitment to leave Switzerland on completion of studies**

You must confirm in writing (in German or English) that you will leave Switzerland upon completing your studies. Please see appendix 2 for a sample letter.

Procedure

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

Please be aware that being admitted to ETH Zurich does not automatically imply that you will be granted a visa by the Migration Office. **However, you should under no circumstances enter Switzerland with a tourist visa as this causes serious problems.**

Fees

Three different fees are incurred during the visa procedure: When you apply to the consulate for a visa, you pay the visa application fee. The canton in Switzerland processing your visa application, i.e., the Migration Office in Zurich, charges CHF 95 for the document that entitles you to be issued with a visa. When you register at the Citizens' Registry Office (“Kreisbüro”) in Zürich, this incurs a fee of CHF 162 for the residence permit.

IMPORTANT:

You must in any case have a residence permit to study in Switzerland. By showing this permit and your passport, you can enter any Schengen state without an additional visa. **Within 14 days of your arrival in Switzerland, you yourself must request the permit at the Citizens' Registry Office (“Kreisbüro”) located in the district in which you now live. Remember to take along the ETH confirmation of matriculation and your passport.** As of 2011, non-EU/EFTA nationals are issued with biometric identity documents and therefore have to have their biometric data recorded. Normally, within a few weeks after your visit to the “Kreisbüro”, you will be requested to collect your permit. This permit is usually valid for one year at a time and can be renewed should your studies take longer. **Please remember that when you want to extend your permit you must yet again produce proof (e.g., a bank statement) of having sufficient means (CHF 21,000) to cover your stay.**

4. Additional information

Employment in the Canton of Zurich

During the semester, you are allowed to seek employment for a maximum of 15 hours per week. During the semester break, you can work up to 100%. ETH Master students are immediately upon entering Switzerland allowed to work at ETH. For further information, please consult <http://www.awa.zh.ch/internet/volkswirtschaftsdirektion/awa/en/home.html>

Subsequent immigration of family members

Subsequent immigration of family members is not allowed in the case of foreign students.

Useful links

Federal Office for Migration <http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home.html>

Canton of Zurich Migration Office www.ma.zh.ch (in German only).

Cantonal and communal authorities address list:

http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/die_oe/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/adressen_kantone_und.html.

Information for Master Students at ETH Zurich: www.master.ethz.ch.

Housing Office of ETH and University Zurich: http://www.wohnen.ethz.ch/index_EN.

Health Insurance: http://www.rektorat.ethz.ch/students/immigration/health_insurance/index_EN.

⁷ This means that a solvent person living in the Canton of Zurich (Swiss citizen or foreigner with B or C permit) underwrites to cover the costs of up to CHF 21'000.- for your living expenses, including accidents and illness, in addition to your return trip. The appropriate form is sent to your home address by the Migration Office of the Canton of Zurich (once they have received your visa application).

APPENDIX 1:**Sample CV for students obliged to obtain a visa**

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 e-mail: 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 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	a 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 with 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/Madam,

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

I herewith confirm that I will leave Switzerland immediately after having completed my studies at ETH Zurich. Upon my return to ***X***, I intend taking 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 herewith authorise the following person at ETH Zurich to substitute me in the procedure of getting a visa:

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

Unterschrift / Signature:
