Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships for Foreign Students at Swiss Universities, Fine Arts and Music Schools

Instructions for Scholarship Holders for the Academic Year 2015-2016

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Instructions for Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship Holders - Academic Year 2015-2016
GENERAL REMARKS

Living in Switzerland and adapting to a new way of University life are matters that may present questions and difficulties to some. In each University, the people in charge of the Swiss Government Scholarship Program will be at your disposal to help you overcome these difficulties and to reply to the questions you may have. On your side, you can contribute to making your stay in Switzerland a success by following these scholarship regulations.

You will find the contact information of the Reception Service (aka Service d’accueil, Welcome Center or International Office) of your University as well as various useful information on the city at the end of this document.
The procedure to receive a valid Visa for Switzerland is shown on the left. Please note: Citizens of the European Union and EFTA states do not require a visa for Switzerland and therefore do not need to do anything in this regard before their arrival.

As it can take several months to process a visa application, please make sure you start the procedure immediately.

To apply for your entry visa for Switzerland, please contact the Swiss Embassy in your country of residence as soon as you receive the notification letter.

This admission letter must be submitted to the Embassy of Switzerland or Swiss Consulate in your home country along with your visa application and all the required documents as it is an essential element in the evaluation of your visa application.

At latest from summer 2015 the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship grant holders are exempted from fees for their visa.

Please do not enter Switzerland with a tourist visa for the scholarship period. This may cause intense additional administrative work and expense for you.

Regardless of your nationality, you require a residence permit if your total duration of stay exceeds 3 months (90 days). For details see pt.1 C) next page.
1. CONTACTING THE RECEPTION SERVICE, THE UNIVERSITY DELEGATES AND THE CANTONAL RESIDENTS’ REGISTRATION OFFICE

A) Reception Service

In each university as well as in the two Federal Institutes of Technology (Lausanne, Zurich) a Reception Service (aka Service d’accueil, Welcome Centre or International Office) is available for Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship Holders. Scholarship holders attending fine arts schools, music academies and/or universities of applied sciences (UAS) will also depend from the local university Reception Service. Special conditions apply for fine arts and music institutions as well as for UAS.

Once you have arrived in your university, please contact the head of your Reception Service. The name and address are provided in the letter you receive from the FCS notifying your scholarship (you will also find the contact information at the end of this document).

The Reception Service provides assistance and counsel. It can help you adapting to your new environment, to find an accommodation (with no guarantee though) and to get in contact with other students, scholarship holders, as well as the local population. It also organizes sightseeing trips and other extra-curricular events.

B) The Delegates

The delegates represent the Swiss universities and Federal Institutes of Technology within the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students FCS. In cooperation with the Reception Services, they will supervise your scholarship. They oversee the development of your research and if necessary will help you with the scholarship extension procedure (when it applies), a change of faculty/orientation or a transfer to another university or education institution.

C) Registration at the Cantonal Resident’s Office

As a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship holder you are expected to move to Switzerland during the grant period. Scholarship holders must live in Switzerland and are required to be resident in the city where they are studying. Regardless of your nationality, you require a residence permit if your total duration of stay exceeds 3 months (90 days). To obtain a residence permit you must register with the appropriate authority. Therefore you are asked to report to the Cantonal Residents’ Registration Office (Einwohnerkontrolle / Contrôle des habitants) within eight days (central office in town or district office) from your arrival in Switzerland. Use your notification letter to attest your Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship holder status. Please establish contact with the Reception Service for further clarification if necessary before applying for your residence permit.

You are required to inform the Cantonal Resident’s Office of any changes in your address. Please also communicate your change of address to your health insurance company (see pt 3. Health Insurance and Allowances), as well as to the Reception Service of your university.
2. REGISTRATION AT THE UNIVERSITY, SEMESTER ENROLMENT AND PAYMENT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP

A) Registration
You are required to fill in the appropriate application forms and provide all requested documents to the Registration Office. If you encounter any problems, the Reception Service will assist you.

B) Semester Enrolment
At the beginning of each semester (if necessary), you should register for classes, lectures and practical work corresponding to your study curriculum (specifically for PhD candidates).

C) Semester Tuition Fees and Master Fees
The Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students FCS does not pay for semester tuition fees and/or for Master fees. In most cases the universities and the Federal Institute of Technology of Zurich (ETHZ) do not require scholarship holders to pay the semester fees (generally around CHF 600.- per semester). In some cases the universities do not waive the PhD or Master fees. Should the Universities and/or Universities of Applied Sciences and fine arts schools not waive the fees, it is up to the scholarship holder to pay for the fees. The FCS is not accountable for these fees.

D) Scholarship Payment
The scholarship is paid at the beginning of each month (starting September 1st) by the Reception Service or your university on a Swiss Bank or Post account. You will thus have to open an account in Switzerland after your arrival. You are supposed to arrive after September 1st and before September 15th.

The scholarship is meant to cover the student’s living expenses for one person. In a Swiss city, the food and housing costs amount approximately to CHF 1’200.- per month per grantee. The scholarship amount alone is not sufficient to sustain further family members. Should you think about bringing your spouse/family please consult directly the Swiss Embassy in your country of residence to inquire further information since the Reception Service is in no position to help you with such requests.

Scholarships in Switzerland are usually exempted from taxation and social contributions. The amount stipulated in your notification letter is thus a net amount. Should the Cantons not waive the taxes and social contributions it is up to the scholarship holder to pay for these taxes. The FCS is not accountable for these taxes.
3. HEALTH INSURANCE AND ALLOWANCES

A) Health and Accident Insurance
Health and accident insurance are mandatory for all residents in Switzerland. From 1st January 2014, postdoctoral research fellows, members of teaching staff and researchers at a University or doctoral students without confirmed registration at a University cannot be exempted anymore from the obligation to take out basic (compulsory) health insurance with a Swiss health insurance company (see abrogation of Article 2: 4bis of the Ordinance on Health Insurance (KVV) January 1, 2014).

° All EU and/or EFTA country scholarship holders are required to have a European health insurance card. If they do not have a European Health insurance card they will have to purchase a Swiss Health Insurance at their own expenses.
° The FCS insures all other scholarship holders (with the exception of EU/EFTA) with a Swiss Health Insurance Company, you will receive more information later.

Please note that the FCS will pay the insurance for the scholarship holder only. If you intend to come to Switzerland with your spouse and/or your family you will have to pay for their insurance on your own. You will receive more information later.

B) Dental Care
Dental care is not covered by the health insurance. Dental care expenses have to be paid by the scholarship holder him/herself.

C) Other Insurances
The FCS has not subscribed to any other insurance for you. If you are interested, the Reception Service can advise you on additional insurance, such as third party liability insurance or as travel insurance for traveling outside of Switzerland. However should you subscribe to any other insurance you will have to pay the premiums by yourself.

D) Housing
The Reception Service can help you to find a room in the University housings. Please note that there is no guarantee that Reception Service will be able to find a room as the demand for housing in Swiss cities is very high.

Please also note that rooms are for single occupancy and are not intended for couples and/or families. If you intend to come to Switzerland with your spouse and/or your family, the International Office will not be able to assist you and you will have to search for accommodation by yourself.

The FCS and the Reception Service are not accountable for housing.

E) Housing Allowance
At the beginning of your scholarship you will receive a lump sum of CHF 300.- to help you pay part of the housing deposit.

F) Initial Expenses
In order to be able to cover your initial expenses when you arrive in Switzerland we advise you to bring with you around CHF 500.-.
4. RESEARCH/ STUDIES

We draw your attention to the following conditions related to your research/ studies:

A) Research/ Study Location
The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are granted for studies in one of the Swiss public Universities, Federal Institutes of Technology or Universities of Applied Sciences. The fine arts and music scholarships are granted for studies in the public music academies, as well as art and design schools.

The scholarship is only valid for full-time research/ studies in Switzerland. It is not valid for on-the-job studies, part-time studies, correspondence courses or mixed programs (part time in Switzerland and part time in another country) or in the framework of the Swiss Mobility Program (exchange semesters are not permitted).

B) Achievement of Objective
Scholarship holders must undertake every effort to achieve the objective for which the scholarship has been granted (diploma, research etc.) within the given time. If it is not the case, the FCS may stop the scholarship.

C) Accessory Professional Activity and Accessory Gains
An accessory professional activity is possible but it must be related to the research. This is possible only with the prior consent of the FCS (please send the FCS your work contracts). Taxes will be perceived on all professional activities. Please note: the FCS is not accountable for those taxes.

If the academic supervisor decides to provide accessory gains for PhD’s and Postdocs this has to be communicated to the FCS. The overall sum (scholarship plus accessory gains) cannot be higher than the standards in the field.

D) Academic Supervisor/ Host Professor
The Academic Supervisor (aka Host Professor) can assist you in choosing the classes and practical work. He/She introduces you to university life, deals with the Professors or lecturers and helps you with the difficulties you may encounter in your research. The Academic Supervisor monitors your reports and informs the delegate of any problems you may encounter.

E) Changes in the Academic Field
You are not allowed to change your research subject or orientation without the explicit consent of the delegate, the Academic Supervisor as well as the FCS.

F) Premature Completion of Studies
If the scholarship holder finishes his research prior to the allotted scholarship duration, this must be communicated to the delegate and the Reception Service.
4. RESEARCH/ STUDIES (continuation)

G) Possible Extension of the Scholarship

The duration of the scholarship is for 12 months, always from September 1st to August 31st. It is not possible to start the scholarship in the Spring Semester or at any other time during the year.

Regulations regarding potential scholarship extensions:

Research Fellowships:
No extension possible.

PhD Fellowships:
The PhD scholarships are awarded for a total of 3 years at maximum but they are subject to evaluation each year. A report will be provided by the Academic Supervisor assessing the work done and recommending the continuation of the scholarship. The scholarships are not automatically extended. Every request will be analyzed according to the FCS criteria. If the Academic Supervisor recommends the continuation of the scholarship it will in principle be extended.

Postdoctoral Fellowships:
No extension possible.

Music and Fine Arts Students only - Master Programs:
It is possible to request an extension. The extension will be decided according to the ECTS credits of the Master program, i.e.:

- 60 ECTS Credits Master = 12 scholarship months maximum = > no extension possible
- 90 ECTS Credits Master = 17 scholarship months maximum = > 5 months extension possible
- 120 ECTS Credits Master = 21 scholarship months maximum = > 9 months extension possible

Music and Fine Arts students that have received a scholarship for their 2nd year of Master will not be eligible for an extension.

If an extension of the scholarship is possible, the request must be submitted to the delegate. The special session of the FCS usually takes place at the beginning of the summer semester (May). The delegate and/or the Reception Service will inform you about a possible extension of the scholarship.

For all questions regarding extensions please get in contact with the Reception Service of your University.
4. RESEARCH/ STUDIES (continuation)

H) Withdrawal of the Scholarship

A serious neglect in the research/studies, non-compliance with FCS regulations, unsatisfactory results, failure at the exams or inadequate language ability, may result in the withdrawal of the scholarship. Failures at an exam session must be reported without delay to the person in charge at the Reception Service. The FCS will then decide on whether or not to continue the scholarship. The FCS can also withdraw the scholarship in the event of changes in the grantees personal situation (e.g. marriage in Switzerland, non-authorized change of orientation, or working without FCS approval).

Any changes in your personal situation must be reported without delay to the person in charge at the Reception Service.

Requests for reconsideration must be submitted to the secretariat of the FCS within 30 days after receiving the decision.

5. HOLIDAYS, LEAVE OF ABSENCE AND FIELDTRIPS

A) Obligation to Announce Any Absence

It is mandatory to request the approval of the Reception Service when traveling abroad or in the case of any other absence from the place of study for more than two weeks, even during the university holidays. If the person in charge at the Reception Service cannot be reached, please contact the secretariat of the FCS. Non compliance to this rule may result in the withdrawal of the scholarship.

B) Holidays and Leave of Absence in the Country of Origin

The scholarship holder is allowed to take up to 5 weeks of holiday per year without the scholarship being reduced or suspended. This is possible only with the consent of the director of studies. If the leave lasts more than 5 weeks, the scholarship will be reduced or suspended. The travel fares and the travel insurance have to be paid by the scholarship holder.

The program of studies must not be affected by absence or holidays.

C) Field Trips

The scholarship is meant for conducting research in the Swiss host institution. It is not meant for spending long periods of time abroad. For Research as well as Postdoc grant holders the scholarship will be suspended during their research abroad and there is no financial support possible by the FCS.

Special conditions apply for PhD students (pursuing a PhD in a Swiss University). A special request (including a time schedule, cost estimate, approval of your Academic Supervisor) has to be submitted by the PhD scholarship holder at the Reception Service no later than one month before starting date of the field trip. A checklist for PhD study field trips is available at your Reception Service.
6. RETURN TO THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

A) Final Report and Scholarship Certificate

Before leaving, you will be asked to fill in a final report form which you will receive from the Reception Service. If needed, they will provide you with guidance. Once the FCS has received your report an official certificate attesting that you were awarded a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship will be sent by letter post.

B) Travel Fares

As the scholarship holder pays the trip to Switzerland the following rules apply for the return trip back home:

° Scholarship holders from European countries pay their return trip on their own.

° Scholarship holders from non-European countries receive a flight allowance (lump sum) at the end of their stay in Switzerland for a ticket back to their country of origin. It is mandatory to announce your return back to your country of origin at least 8 weeks before your departure to the Reception Service.

° Scholarship holders who remain in Switzerland for more than six months after completion of the scholarship, including those who continue their studies in Switzerland, who take up a professional activity or finish their training in a third country, will not receive the return allowance.

The Reception Service will provide you with more information in due time.

C) Post-Scholarship Contacts with Switzerland

We would be delighted if you could keep in touch with your Host Professors in Switzerland after returning home. The delegate and the Reception Service will help you maintain contact with Swiss scientific and cultural institutions. We would appreciate it if you could inform us about your professional career and also keep in touch with the Swiss Embassy, the Swiss Consulate or where applicable with the swissnex in your country.

And now…
we wish you enriching, successful and enjoyable studies. Welcome to Switzerland!
7. USEFUL INFORMATION & CONTACTS

Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

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Ville de Lausanne: http://www.lausanne-tourisme.ch

Informations sur la Suisse: http://www.swissworld.org

Eidgenössische Stipendienkommission für ausländische Studierende ESKAS
Commission fédérale des bourses pour étudiants étrangers CFBE
Commissione federale delle borse per studenti stranieri CFBS

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