

## To our international students who need visa

- **except exchange students**
- **except students with work contract at the University of Bern**

Vice-Rectorate International and  
Academic Careers

**UniBE International**

Bern, January 2025

### Information and recommendations for visa application

Here we have listed information and suggestions on entry requirements and visa applications for regular incoming non-EU/EFTA students at the University of Bern:

#### Rental agreements:

1. Where possible, enclose a rental agreement for the relevant period with your visa application.
2. It is important that you live in the city of Bern (zip code 3000 – 3027), or at least in the canton of Bern. If you choose to live in another canton, you may not be eligible for a student visa to study at the University of Bern. (Other types of visa may be subject to different rules.)
3. The rental period should be at least 3 months (preferably 1 or 2 semesters).
4. To determine the number of rooms a couple or family requires, the migration authorities will calculate the number of persons in a family, less 1. Therefore, a family of four needs an apartment with at least 3 rooms, while couples need at least a 1.5 to 2 room apartment.



*Especially for the entry to Switzerland and the first months in Bern, we recommend a room in a student residence. Since the student dorms are often fully booked weeks before the start of the semester, we recommend that you register early. You will find a compilation of student dorms on our webpage: [Accommodation-Living](#).*

**Financial statement** for students without work contract at the University of Bern (e.g., MA students):

1. Visa applications must be accompanied by proof of independent financial means amounting to at least CHF 18,000. This money must be deposited at a bank approved by [FINMA](#).
2. The account holder must be either the person applying for the entry visa or a guarantor living in Switzerland, i.e. proof of financial independence can also be provided via the guarantee of a Swiss citizen or a person living in Switzerland with a B or C residence permit ([Declaration of Sponsorship](#)).



*Each year in which a student is resident in the canton of Bern, the immigration authorities will ask to see a financial statement that proves the applicant has a balance of CHF 18,000. A sideline activity, such as part-time employment, that results in income must not be included in the financial statement, as the authorities are only interested in seeing that the student has this minimum balance.*

**Other:**

1. Visa applications are best submitted early. Immigration officials need at least 8 to 12 weeks to process applications. If more documents are subsequently required, it may take even longer.
2. Passport validity: A valid passport is a prerequisite for both visa and residency permit in Switzerland. Normally, students receive a residency permit for 12 months, which can be renewed annually. The passport must therefore be valid for at least 12+6 months (18 months in total) upon entry into Switzerland.
3. Depending on your place of residence in the canton of Bern, all letters and information from government organisations are in German (or French), the official languages in the Canton of Bern.

**Possible reasons for the refusal of a visa application:**

The migration authorities have discretionary powers when issuing visas. Laws pertaining to foreign nationals are only provided in German. Some common reasons for refusal are:

- The applicant is already over 30 years of age.
- The applicant already has a Master's degree.
- There are reasonable grounds for suspicion that the applicant will not leave Switzerland after his/her studies ("unconfirmed departure"). We recommend that you confirm in your letter of motivation that you stay in Switzerland shall be for "study purposes" only.
- The applicant does not speak (enough) German.



*If you are enrolled in a Master's program taught in English, we recommend you provide proof of this when applying for a visa. You may want to ask the directorate of your studies program for a Letter of Support, stating that the program is run in English.*



**Disclaimer:**

Despite successful matriculation at the University of Bern, it is possible that immigration officials will reject a visa application. Unfortunately, the University of Bern does not provide any legal advice and can neither speed up nor influence the decision of the authorities.