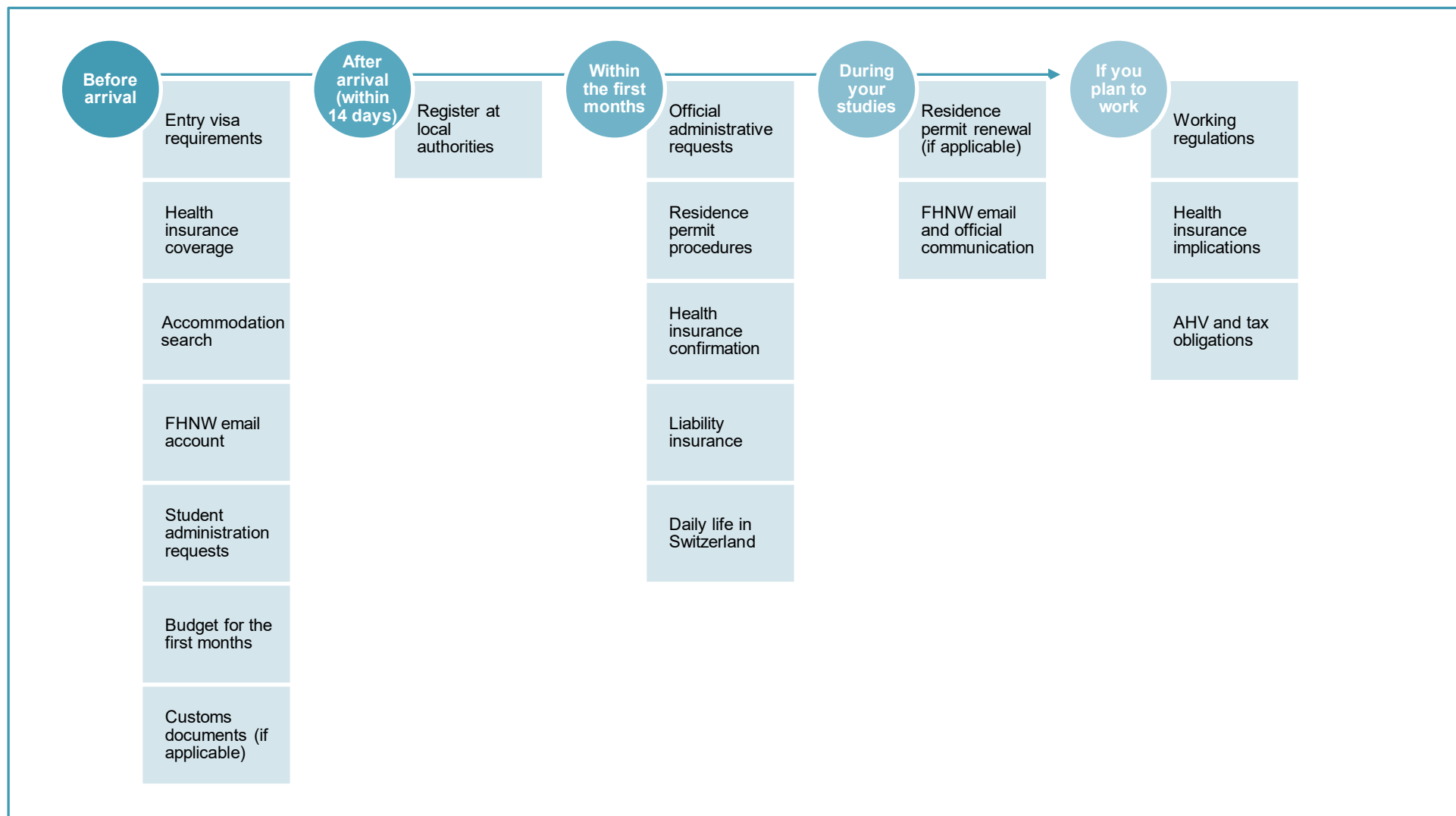


Organise your life in Switzerland

Preparation guide

**Zentrale Studienadministration
Internationales, Arbeit & Integration**

What to do when



QuickStart

✓ Checklist

After admission and BEFORE arrival

- ☐ Check entry visa requirements (if applicable)
- ☐ Arrange health insurance coverage for arrival & first months
- ☐ Start accommodation search early
- ☐ Activate and check FHNW email regularly
- ☐ Respond to FHNW administrative requests
- ☐ Plan first months' budget
- ☐ Prepare customs documents if bringing instruments/car

⚠ Within 14 days after arrival

- ☐ Register at local authorities

Within the first months - settle in

- ☐ Respond to official requests – residence permit/ health insurance
- ☐ Consider liability insurance
- ☐ Set up daily life

During your studies – stay up to date

- ☐ Renew residence permit, if needed
- ☐ Check FHNW email regularly

If you plan to work – check requirements first

- ☐ Review working regulations
- ☐ Review health insurance implications (e.g. adapt exemption if needed)
- ☐ Review AHV and tax implications and obligations

What becomes relevant later?

This guide is designed both for students who are exploring what studying in Switzerland may involve and for admitted students preparing their arrival.

Not everything needs to be organised at the same time. However, some topics are important to be aware of early because they can involve deadlines, official procedures or financial consequences later.

After arrival, authorities may contact you about health insurance, residence permit procedures or legal requirements. It is important to check official communication regularly, respond in time and ask the relevant authority if something is unclear. This is normal in Switzerland.

Other topics, such as liability insurance, working during your studies, AHV/social security, taxes, banking, mobile phone plans, public transport, everyday life in Basel and German language support, will become relevant step by step.

Further details and practical guidance will be available after admission via FHNW Inside.

⚠ Important:

You do not need to organise everything now. Focus on the steps that are relevant for your current stage — and keep track of the topics that will require action later.

Clickable detailed guidance

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Organise your life in Switzerland

This guide is intended for prospective, admitted and incoming students who would like to understand what organising life in Switzerland may involve before and after starting their studies.

This information helps you understand what is relevant at each stage to organise your life with confidence:

- what you must organise **before arrival**
- what you must do **when you arrive**
- what to expect in the **first months**

Some detailed resources are available via [FHNW Inside](#) and require a FHNW login. Admitted students will receive access before the start of their studies.

This guide provides general orientation and does not replace official information from Swiss authorities or FHNW admission regulations.

Requirements **can differ** depending on your nationality, residence status, insurance situation and place of residence. Please do not rely only on what other students tell you — **always check what applies to your own case.**

1 What you need to consider BEFORE arrival

If you are planning to move to Switzerland for your studies, there are a few key things to consider and organise **before arrival**.

1.1 Official communication

After admission, your FHNW email account will be used for official and administrative communication related to your studies. Activate it as soon as you receive access, check it regularly and respond when required. We recommend setting it up on your phone.

1.2 Entry visa (if applicable)

Depending on your nationality, you may need a visa to enter Switzerland for study purposes. A tourist visa or tourist status is not sufficient for taking up studies and residence in Switzerland.

For non-EU/non-EFTA nationals, an entry visa is generally required before entering Switzerland for study purposes.

The entry visa is not the same as the residence permit, which all foreign students need to apply for by registering with the authorities within 14 days upon arrival.

→ [Check entry visa requirements](#) early and apply in time at your nearest Swiss embassy
Visa processes can take several weeks.

1.3 Health insurance (mandatory from day 1)

Health insurance in Switzerland is **mandatory and your responsibility**.

You must be covered **from your first day in Switzerland**, including accident coverage.

This means:

- checking whether your current insurance is valid in Switzerland (If you are insured in an EU/EFTA country, bring your European Health Insurance Card with you. KVG/LAMal will review your individual situation after arrival and inform you about the next steps.)

or

- arranging suitable insurance before arrival.

Students usually choose between specialised student insurance offers and Swiss basic health insurance.

Specialised student insurance is often cheaper, but requires an exemption from Swiss basic health insurance. KVG/LAMal will review your individual case after arrival. If you start working during your studies, you may need to switch to Swiss basic health insurance.

Swiss basic health insurance is usually more expensive, but no exemption is needed. Depending on your situation, you may be eligible for a premium reduction, and you usually do not need to change insurance if you start working.

Important:

Health insurance is not automatic in Switzerland, unlike in some other countries.

After arrival, KVG/LAMal will contact you to clarify your insurance situation. Please take these official letters or emails seriously, respond within the given deadline and provide the required information or documents.

Missing or late responses may lead to retroactive insurance assignment and additional costs.



Gemeinsame Einrichtung KVG
Institution commune LAMal
Istituzione comune LAMal

1.4 Financial planning

Switzerland has a high cost of living, especially in the first months (for example rental deposits, migration fees, furniture, ...)

As a general orientation:

→ CHF 1,200 – 2,000 per month (depending on your lifestyle)

Example of a [detailed list of expected costs](#)

You should plan to:

- cover your living costs independently at the beginning
- have savings or financial support available

⚠ Important:

- Scholarships exist, but they are **limited and competitive** (you will receive further information from your institute at a given time).
- They may support part of your costs, but **rarely cover everything**

Many students combine:

- personal savings
- family support
- scholarships (if awarded)
- occasional secondary jobs

Studying here is manageable with realistic planning and careful budgeting. Practical tips for living on a budget in the Basel area will be available via [FHNW Inside](#) (FHNW login required)

Tuition fees and additional costs

In addition to living costs, you should plan for study-related expenses.

The following figures are provided as general orientation and may be subject to change. Please always check the official FHNW information for binding fee details.

Registration fee (one-time):	CHF 200
Semester fee:	CHF 750 (Swiss / legal Swiss domicile for purposes other than studying) CHF 1,000 (EU/EFTA) CHF 1,250 (other nationalities)
Material costs (per semester):	CHF 100
Student association:	CHF 10 per semester
Diploma fee (one-time):	CHF 300

1.5 Accommodation (start early)

Finding accommodation in Basel takes time — start early.

Good to know:

- the housing market is competitive
- deposits of 1–3 months are standard
- the FHNW does not provide housing

Where to live

Many students live in **Basel-Stadt**, close to the academy. From an administrative and practical perspective, this is usually the safest and most straightforward option.

Living in Basel-Landschaft or across the border in France or Germany is possible, but it can create considerable administrative complexity. This may affect registration, residence permit procedures, health insurance, taxation, work eligibility and access to certain forms of support.

We therefore strongly recommend that international students choose accommodation in Basel-Stadt whenever possible. This is especially important at the beginning of your studies, when several administrative processes are still being set up.

Important for non-EU/non-EFTA students:

Living outside Switzerland during your studies may lead to serious restrictions. In many cases, non-EU/non-EFTA students living outside Switzerland are not permitted to work in Switzerland. Please do not choose accommodation across the border without clarifying the implications first.

Platforms for accommodation

Students commonly use the following platforms:

- [wove.ch](https://www.wove.ch) → student housing offers
- [wgzimmer.ch](https://www.wgzimmer.ch) → shared flats (WG), very popular among students
- [markt.unibas.ch](https://www.markt.unibas.ch) → rooms, apartments, sublets
- [Uni Basel Student Residence Cooperative](#)
- [Catholic University Student Home](#)
- [Pro-Filia House Basel-Stadt](#) (only women)
- Short-term accommodations: [Youth Hostels](#) ; [Basel Backpack](#) ; [Hyve](#) ; [Flatfox](#)

Avoid scams

When searching for accommodation online, be cautious.

Typical warning signs:

- requests to pay money in advance before seeing the apartment
- offers that seem unusually cheap for Basel
- landlords who claim to be abroad and cannot show the apartment
- pressure to decide or transfer money quickly

Important:

- Never transfer money before you have a confirmed and trustworthy agreement
- If something feels unclear or suspicious, take time to verify

A careful approach helps you avoid unnecessary financial loss and stress.

1.6 Bringing instruments, personal belongings and cars

Switzerland is not part of the EU – your belongings may be subject to customs regulations.

Good to know:

- Personal and study-related items are usually duty-free
- Items may need to be declared at the border or before travelling

Musical instruments

- Instruments with protected materials (e.g. certain woods, ivory) may require additional permits (CITES)
- Carry relevant documentation (especially proof of ownership)

Important:

- Check the official [Swiss customs information](#) before travelling
- If applicable declare items autonomously via [the official Swiss declaration app](#)
Declare instruments or valuable equipment if required (e.g. via QuickZoll), especially if purchased abroad → [Official information on import of instruments and instrument certificates](#)

Cars

- Importing a car into Switzerland requires additional administrative steps and formalities → [rules for vehicle import](#)
- Parking in Switzerland can be limited and expensive
- Motorways require a paid vignette (toll sticker)
- Public transport in Switzerland is well developed and reliable

Recommendation:

Bringing a car is generally not necessary and often not recommended for students, parking options near campus are very limited and costly.

1.7 Working during your studies (basic orientation)

Many students work alongside their studies, whether for financial reasons or to gain professional experience. Your primary purpose in Switzerland is your studies. **Any work must remain secondary.**

If you are an international student, working alongside your studies is subject to conditions:

- conditions depend on your nationality and residence status
- working hours are limited
- permits or approvals may be required

Important

- Do not rely on work as your main source of income at the beginning
- It may take time to organise, and not all students are immediately allowed to work.

Detailed information on working while studying will become relevant after arrival and available via → [FHNW Inside](#) (FHNW login required)

2 What you must do AFTER arrival (within 14 days)

2.1 Mandatory registration with the local authorities

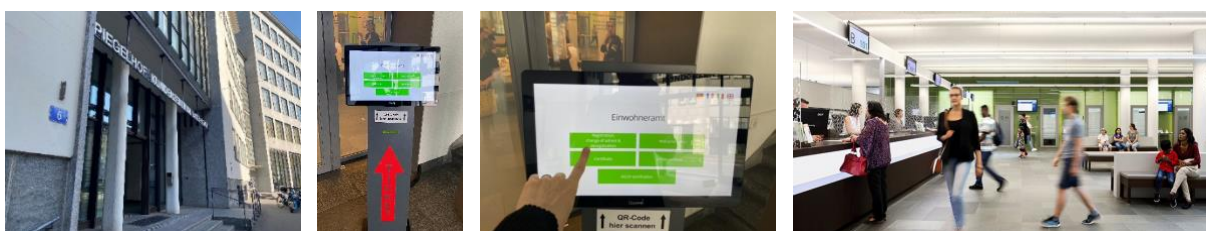
When you move to Basel for your studies, you **must** register with the local authorities **within 14 days of arrival**. This is a mandatory administrative step and ensures that everything else runs smoothly during your stay (residence permit, health insurance, bank accounts, etc.).

Who needs to register?

- International students
- Swiss students (from another canton), depending on your situation, you will register as:
 - **Main residence** → if Basel becomes your main place of living
 - **Secondary residence (*Wochenaufenthalt*)** → if your main residence (e.g. with your family) remains in another canton and you return there regularly

How to register

- Registration takes place at your local municipality in person (for Basel-Stadt: Einwohneramt Spiegelgasse 6)
- Fees apply



The office will inform you about the specific requirements for your case, generally the following documents are required:

- a valid passport or ID
- your confirmation of study matriculation
- your address details (e.g. rental agreement)
- proof of financial means, if applicable



Important:

The residence permit process

- requires annual renewal
- conditions depend on your nationality/status
- fees apply

3 What happens in the first months

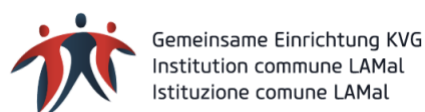
After your arrival and registration, a number of administrative processes will gradually begin. You may be contacted by different authorities (for example KVG/LAMal, the migration office or your municipality) and asked to provide documents, confirm information or complete further steps. This is a normal part of settling in in Switzerland.

Administrative processes in Switzerland are generally structured and deadline-based. Staying responsive helps you avoid unnecessary complications.

During the first months, the following topics commonly become relevant:

3.1 Health insurance confirmation

Health insurance is mandatory in Switzerland. After arrival, authorities (KVG/LAMal) may contact you to confirm your insurance situation or request additional documents. Depending on your situation, you may also be eligible to apply for an exemption and/or cantonal prime reduction.



3.2 Residence permit procedures

For international students, registering with the local authorities initiates the residence permit process. Migration authorities may contact you with additional requests or appointments to complete the procedure.

3.3 Liability insurance

Private liability insurance is not mandatory by law, but strongly recommended in Switzerland. It may protect you from high unexpected costs, may be required for rental contracts, and is mandatory if you wish to borrow instruments from the Basel Academy of Music FHNW.



Important:

You are responsible for:

- checking your FHNW email and postal mail regularly
- responding within deadlines
- contacting the authorities early if something is unclear — this is normal in Switzerland

You do not need to organise everything immediately. After admission and arrival further guidance and practical support will be available later via → [FHNW Inside](#) (FHNW login required)

3.4 German language skills

German is not always required for admission, but it plays an important role in everyday life in Switzerland.

Basic skills make daily situations easier (e.g. administration, housing, services) and can support communication in lessons, rehearsals, and ensembles. They also help you connect more easily with people, engage more deeply with the local cultural and professional environment, and represent a valuable asset for your future.

What to expect

- Basic German helps in daily situations (e.g. housing, authorities)
- Many administrative processes are in German
- Some professional activities (e.g. teaching) require stronger skills

Academic requirements

Language requirements depend on the specific study programme – see specific admission requirements for your chosen degree programme.

Some programmes require German; others are taught mainly in English.

Reality check:

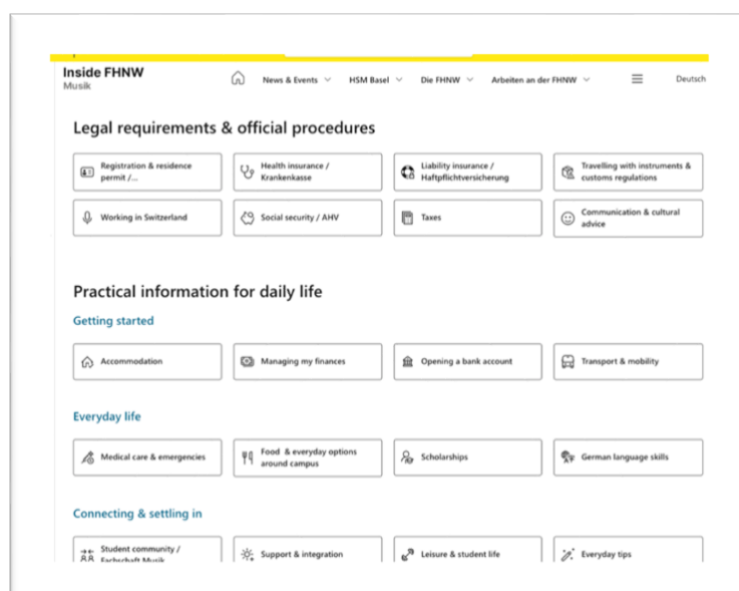
Basic skills will make daily life and professional opportunities significantly easier.

3.5 Set up your daily life – guidance and resources for later

After admission, you will receive your FHNW email address and access information before the start of your studies and you will be able to access **FHNW Inside**, your central resource for practical guidance during your studies.

There you will find detailed information on topics such as health insurance and exemptions; residence permit procedures; working regulations, AHV and taxes; liability insurance; practical tips for studying and living in Basel

To find detailed information that is relevant to you later:



→ [Access FHNW Inside](#)

For a broader overview of living in Basel and practical information about the city, you may also consult → [Hello Basel - official city guide, available in multiple languages](#)

4 Still have questions?

For questions about organising life in Switzerland after admission, you may contact us at organisemylife.hsm@fhnw.ch.

For questions about admission, study programmes, application procedures or course-related matters, please contact the relevant study administration.

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Important note

This information is intended as general orientation for students and does not replace official, legal or administrative advice. Requirements may vary depending on nationality, residence status, insurance situation and individual circumstances. For migration, visa, health insurance, employment, tax, customs or other legal matters, the relevant official authorities and offices remain the binding and final source of information.

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