

SUMMARY

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IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE VISA & RESIDENCE PERMIT

- What is the difference between a visa & a residence permit?

| Visa | Residence permit |
|--|---|
| Required for some nationalities but not all | Required for all non-Swiss nationals |
| Delivered by Swiss representations overseas (embassy or consulate) | Delivered by cantonal authorities. In Geneva: OCPM - Office cantonal de la population et des migrations |
| Valid for 1-3 months Attached to a blank page in your passport | Separate document, valid for 12 months renewable yearly until the end of study programme |
| Allows you to enter Switzerland Does not allow you to live in Switzerland | Allows you to enter Switzerland and live in the canton that delivered it |

- Who needs to apply for a visa?

Please consult the [Swiss State Secretariat for Migration \(SEM\)](#) website to check whether your nationality requires a student visa.

| Nationality | Need student visa | Need residence permit |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|
| EU/EFTA Non-EU/EFTA, but qualify for visa waiver | No | Yes |
| Non-EU/EFTA, no visa waiver | Yes | Yes |

- When to apply and how long does it take?

Visa applications take 3-5 months to be processed. Be sure to submit your application no later than May. We advise you to start the process at the earliest, for a smooth and stress free experience! If you haven't received a response by mid July, you can contact the admission team with your tracking number and we can try to enquire.

VISA AND RESIDENCE PERMIT APPLICATION

You may submit your visa application in person at a local embassy, or online through the OCPM (Cantonal Office for Population and Migration – the Geneva immigration authorities) online application platform.

OPTION 1: APPLY FOR YOUR VISA IN PERSON VIA THE EMBASSY (RECOMMENDED)

As a student, you need to apply for a **Type D National Visa** for a stay of more than 90 days. Please check the visa requirements on [this website](#) by selecting your country of residence.

If you apply for your visa through an embassy, please follow the document checklist and procedures provided by the local embassy.

OPTION 2: APPLY FOR YOUR VISA/RESIDENCE PERMIT ONLINE VIA THE OCPM

It is possible to apply your visa and/or residence permit online directly with the Geneva immigration authorities. In order to apply for it, you need to create an online digital account.

If you are a Non-EU/EFTA citizen, this online process allows you to apply for both your student visa and residence permit simultaneously.

If you are an EU/EFTA citizen, this online process allows you to apply for your residence permit.

IMPORTANT: If you have already started the visa procedure with an embassy, please do not apply online as it will create duplicates and administrative errors.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE APPLYING ONLINE

Please note that our admission team maintains continual communication with the Geneva cantonal authorities, and that the following online application process has received endorsement from the OCPM (Cantonal Office for Population and Migration – the Geneva immigration authorities). You may come across inconsistent information on the website of the Swiss representation in your home country; however, the information provided here should be regarded as reliable. For any additional enquirers, please do not hesitate to contact us at admission@graduateinstitute.ch.

STEP 1 - CREATE AN ONLINE DIGITAL ACCOUNT ("E-DÉMARCHES") ON THE OCPM WEBSITE

Click the link: <https://www.ge.ch/creer-compte-e-demarches/creer-mon-compte-personnel>

If you do not have a Swiss or French phone number, please scroll to the bottom of the website to fill out your personal information. Their IT team will contact you by phone call to create your account manually.

ge.ch

e-démarches Recherche Menu

Créer un compte pour les e-démarches

Je n'ai pas de numéro de téléphone suisse ou français

Merci de remplir le formulaire ci-dessous.

Avez-vous un numéro de téléphone suisse ou français ? *

Oui Non

Payez-vous déjà des impôts à Genève ? *

Oui Non

Merci de renseigner vos coordonnées. Nous vous recontacterons par téléphone pour créer votre compte.

Nom * Prénom *

Date de naissance * date of birth Email *

Téléphone de contact * phone number with country code

Langue de contact préférée *

Français Anglais

Continuer

<----- Do you have Swiss or French phone number? click 'Non'

<----- Have you ever paid taxes in Geneva? click 'Non'

<----- language preference, click 'Anglais' (English)

<----- click 'Continuer' to go to next page

On the next page, please review your information and click 'Valider' to submit your account creation request.

Modifier

Référence de la demande 00 [REDACTED] <----- Your request reference number, you can note it somewhere, but it is not mandatory.

Retour Valider <----- click here

When you see "Nous avons bien enregistré votre demande", it means that your request has been received. Please note that there will be no further communication until you receive a phone call from them; they will not reach out to you or send an automatic email to your email address.

Nous avons bien enregistré votre demande.

Nous vous contacterons prochainement par téléphone pour créer votre compte.

<----- They received your account creation request.

The account creation process takes some time. You will receive a call from Geneva (+41 22 XXX XX XX) within 15 working days, during their working hours (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, Swiss time). If you miss their call, you can call them back, during their working hours.

STEP 2 - APPLY FOR YOUR STUDENT VISA AND/OR RESIDENCE PERMIT

When you have your account, click the link: <https://www.ge.ch/en/ask-student-permit>

1. Overview

If you are from a foreign country and wish to study and live in Geneva, you will need a residence permit.

Conditions to obtain this permit vary depending on your nationality.

- You are a EU/EFTA national and wish to apply for a student permit?

[Application for a student permit for a EU/EFTA national](#)

Click here if you hold a passport from from an EU/EFTA country

- You are a national of a non-EU/EFTA country and wish to apply for a student permit ?

[Application for a student permit for foreign nationals who are not EU/EFTA citizens](#)

Click here if you hold a passport from a non-EU/EFTA country, or if your nationality qualifies for a visa waiver

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You will arrive on another page, scroll below to the bottom of the page. Click 'Access online form'.

Apply for a student permit

The web tile is written for a student permit.

However, it is also applicable for visa applications for Non-EU/EFTA citizens.

Your application can be done either online or by postal mail.

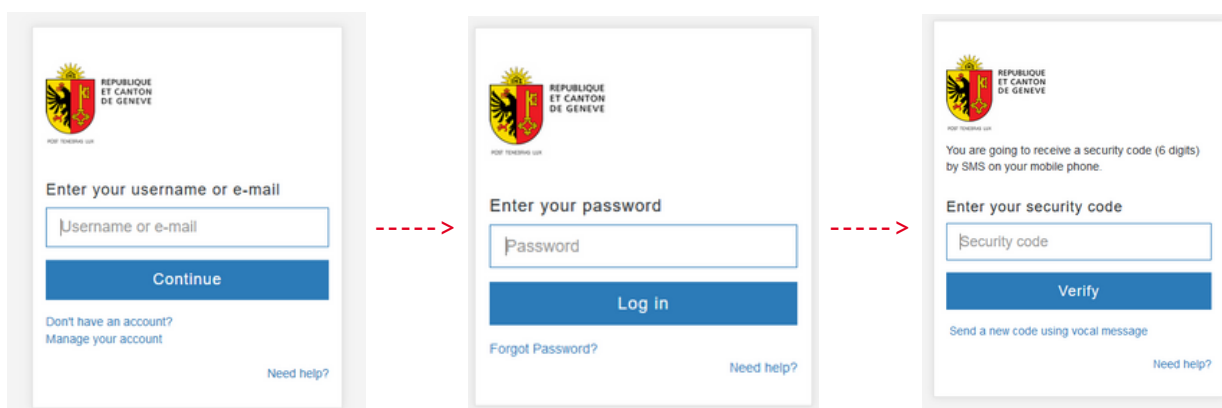
[Access online form](#)

[Download form to send by postal mail](#)

click here

Then, enter your account ID and password. You will receive an SMS code and will find an English version of the form.

If you cannot receive the SMS code, please apply for your visa through your local embassy.



Follow the steps to fill out the form, upload the required documents, pay the application fee, and submit your application.

You can find a flowchart for more detailed information at the end of this guideline document.

DOCUMENT CHECKLIST (ONLINE APPLICATION)

This checklist is only for the OCPM online application, If you apply for your visa through an embassy, please follow the embassy's requirements.

EU/EFTA NATIONALS

- Colour copy of a valid identity document;
- 1 passport-size photo;
- Proof of enrollment at the Institute (our admission attestation, which you can download after you confirm your admission);
- Evidence of financial means and/or proof of financial support (form O if your guarantor resides in Switzerland);
- In case of subletting or renting accommodation in Geneva from a third party, an attestation from the landlord established according to form AL (with a copy of the main lease and a copy of the landlord's identity document);
- Copy of the departure certificate from the canton of origin, if you have previously resided in another Swiss canton.

NON EU/EFTA NATIONALS OR QUALIFIES FOR A VISA WAIVER

- Colour copy of a valid identity document;
- 1 passport-size photo;
- Proof of enrollment at the Institute (our admission attestation, which you can download after you confirm your admission);
- CV/resume;
- Letter of motivation, indicating your intentions upon completion of studies;
- Detailed plan of studies (your programme curriculum, which can be downloaded [here](#));
- Evidence of financial means and/or proof of financial support (form O if your guarantor resides in Switzerland);
- Copy of your higher education degree diploma(s), and/or attestation of successful completion of your most recent degree programme;
- Written commitment to leave Switzerland upon programme completion (template available [here](#));
- In case of subletting or renting accommodation in Geneva from a third party, an attestation from the landlord established according to form AL (with a copy of the main lease and a copy of the landlord's identity document);
- Copy of the departure certificate from the canton, of origin if you have previously resided in another Swiss canton;

FAQs

1. What is the difference between applying through an embassy and the online process with OCPM?

| | EMBASSY (IN PERSON) | OCPM (ONLINE) |
|-------------|--|---|
| PROS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face procedure sometimes make people feel more secure. • You can track your visa process with your embassy contact. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit your application at any time, without an appointment. • Paperless—submit digital documents only. • With your initial registration, your file is automatically reviewed for both a visa and a residence permit. |
| CONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appointment is required in most countries, and slots are limited. • The embassy location might be far from where you live. • The requested documents may be more complex. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to create an online account with their manual phone call system. • No contact person, cannot predict timing of communication. |
| FEES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The visa cost varies according to the country. • Still need to pay your residence permit fee after you arrive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay the residence permit fee at the moment you submit your visa/permit application online. • No extra visa fee for collecting your visa from the embassy. |

2. I have started an application with my embassy, but can I register with OCPM now?

If you have already started the procedure with an embassy, please **DO NOT** use the OCPM online form as it will create duplicates and administrative errors.

3. I am an EU/EFTA national, I do not need a visa, can I apply for the residence permit later?

EU/EFTA nationals can apply for a residence permit maximum 3 months before arrival, no later than 14 days after arrival. You can follow the procedure above to apply for your residence permit online, or send the [Form E](#) and the required documents to OCPM by post when you arrive in Geneva.

It is **IMPORTANT** to write your address in Geneva and the exact date of arrival on your application form, as the OCPM will send the subsequent communication directly to that address on the date that you indicated in the form.

4. What is the cost of the OCPM online application?

- EU/EFTA nationals: CHF 65
- Non-EU/EFTA nationals: CHF 95

This cost is only for your permit application, you will need to pay additional fees for a biometric appointment after your arrival, [if applicable](#).

5. What documents to submit as evidence of financial means and/or proof of support?

Proof of financial means: ideally, approx. CHF 2,000 per month, minimum CHF 20,000 per year. For example: bank statements; scholarship letter, if any; proof of any loans and available savings; letter from a guarantor or parent, stating that s/he will assist you financially during your studies (dated and signed); any paid employment plans.

6. Who qualifies as a 'non-EU/EFTA national but visa waiver' applicant?

If you possess a passport from any of the following countries: Andorra, Australia, Great Britain, Japan, Malaysia, Monaco, New Zealand, San Marino, Singapore, Sultanate of Brunei and Vatican.

7. I do not have my accommodation finalised. What should I give as an address in Switzerland?

You can have a temporary address during the application. It can be a hotel booking, or confirmation from the residence you have applied for. However, make sure to notify the OCPM if you change your address, because all communication from the OCPM will be postal.

8. How to answer the following questions on the OCPM application form?

Course end date => Please indicate the same date as the one indicated on your admission attestation letter

Courses taken in capacity as an intern / external => Please choose 'External'

9. I haven't received any email confirmation from OCPM, is my application complete?

Once you submit your online application, you will receive an automatic email from OCPM, which means your application was received. It is normal not to receive further communications from OCPM within 3 months. What we can do is be patient and wait. If you have any doubts about your visa/permit application, please do not hesitate to send an email to admission@graduateinstitute.ch.

10. What are the final steps for the residence permit when I arrive in Geneva?

It is mandatory to announce your arrival to OCPM within 14 days of arrival. Subsequently, you will receive a letter by post to arrange a biometric appointment. Following this appointment, your residence permit card will be delivered to you by post within 2 weeks. The entire process usually takes 1-3 months from the time of your arrival in Geneva.

11. What type of permit will I receive? What is the duration of the permit?

As a student, you will receive a permit B, generally issued for one year. You will need to renew it for your second year. The renewal process is simple and straightforward.

If your permit covers the full duration of your study programme, a renewal will not be necessary.

12. I am a non-EU/EFTA national, but I have a valid Schengen 'visa C' on my passport, or my nationality allows me to travel to Switzerland for less than 90 days. Can I come to Switzerland without a student visa and apply for my student residence permit directly after arrival?

If you are already in Switzerland, you can apply for your residence permit via the OCPM online application form; OCPM will decide if they accept your file. The application procedure is the same as an EU/EFTA national applicant. However, we do not recommend this, due to the uncertainty of being granted a residence permit.

13. Is it possible to study in Geneva but live in another canton in Switzerland?

Contact the Population Office of the commune where you will be living, to enquire about the possibility of obtaining your residence permit. The OCPM online application portal is not available in your case, because OCPM is only in charge of the Geneva canton application. Swiss regulations generally require residence in the same canton where the school is located. Exceptions must be evaluated by the other canton.

14. Is it possible to update the information on the application form after submitting my permit application?

You will not be able to modify the information on your form after submission. If your information or documents are not eligible or incomplete, OCPM will contact you.

15. I have not received my bachelor degree diploma yet, can I start the visa application process?

You can begin the process now, and we recommend you start it as soon as possible. If you do not have a bachelor degree diploma, you can upload your current highest education diploma (if applicable), your latest transcripts, your current university enrolment confirmation, or an official document confirming your expected date of degree conferral, under the 'copy of diplomas' section.

16. If my dependent family members would like to come to Switzerland to live with me, what kind of permit do they need to apply for? How to apply for it?

They need to apply for a family reunion (*regroupement familial*) permit. If you apply for your visa and/or residence permit online, you can submit their applications at the same time, in the same form. If you apply through an embassy, please check the requirements with the embassy.

17. What document do I need to upload under the 'registration certificate' section?

Your admission attestation, not your admission letter.

18. Are the 'letter of motivation' and the 'written commitment to leave Switzerland' considered to be the same document?

They are not the same document. The letter provides justification for coming to study in Switzerland, at the Geneva Graduate Institute. The written commitment document explains your plans following the completion of your study programme; you can find a template [here](#).

19. Where can I find the detailed plan of studies?

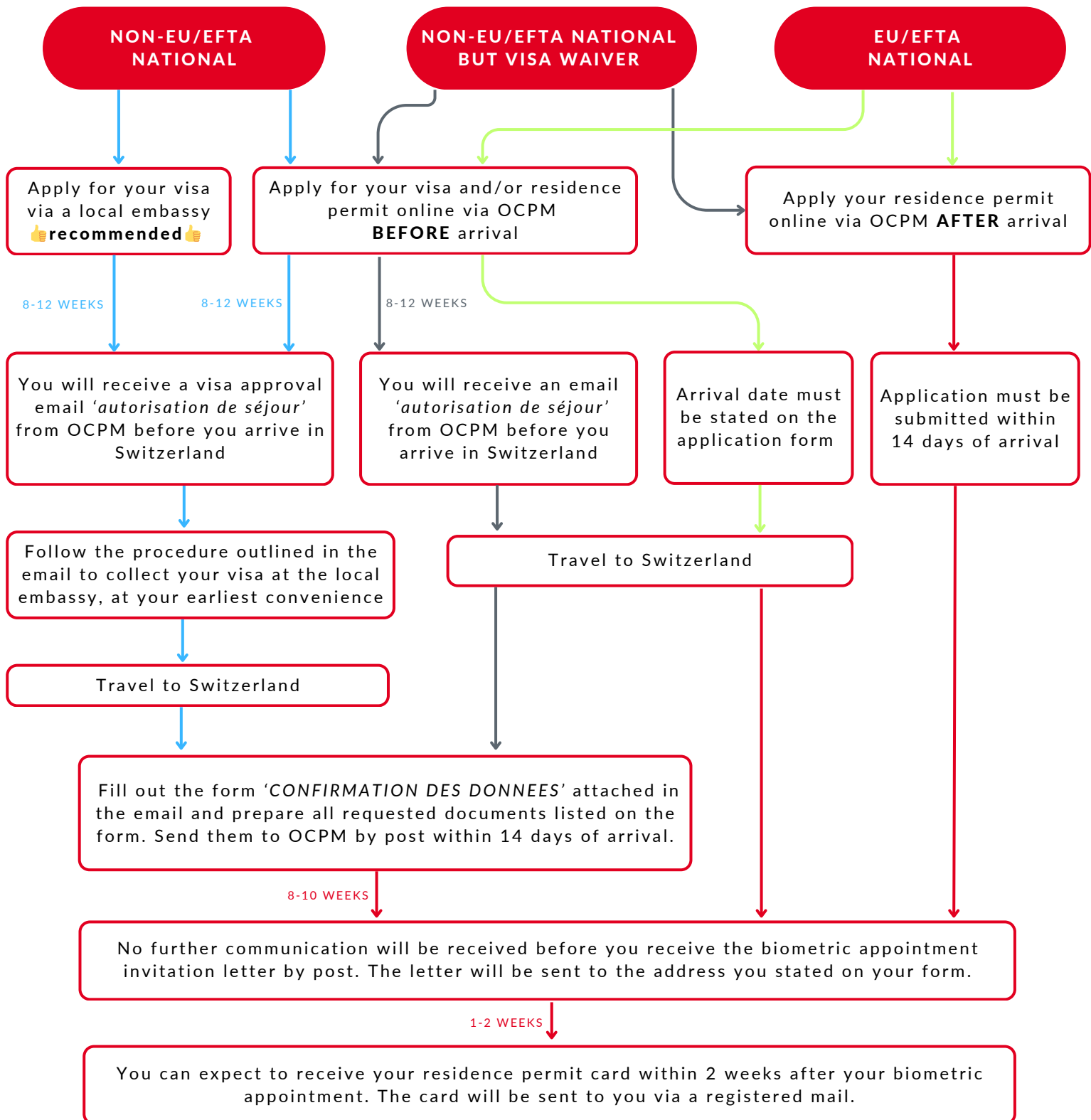
Please click the [course catalogue](#) to find your programme, then you will find the study plan document under PROGRAMME CURRICULUM. You can press 'Ctrl+P' to download this document as a pdf.

20. Can I contact OCPM directly to follow up on my application?

If you submitted your visa and/or residence permit application **more than 3 months** ago and have not received any updates from OCPM, you may use the [Online Contact Form](#) to reach out to them. Please note that this form is not available if you submitted your application less than 3 months ago.

21. I cannot receive the SMS code from OCPM to log in to my account. What should I do?

Please contact their IT team using the [Online Contact Form](#) (available in French only), or call them at +41 840 235 235 (Monday to Friday, 7am to 6pm, Swiss time; available in French only).



OCPM OFFICE

Office cantonal de la population et des migrations
Case postale 2652
1211 Genève 2

BIOMETRIC CENTER

ARCenter
2 route de Peney
1214 Vernier