



UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Service des Affaires Sociales  
et de la Mobilité Etudiante

GUIDE FOR  
**EXCHANGE  
STUDENTS**  
—  
**2025/2026**

# Welcome to the University of Lausanne !

You will now be getting ready to spend one or two semesters pursuing your studies in Lausanne and we are delighted you will be joining us. This guide aims to provide you with all the key information you need to plan for your time here as well as you can.

The Social Affairs and Student Mobility Office (SASME) will be your main point of contact when you arrive at UNIL. You can get in touch with us for any questions you may have about:

- visas, residence permits, accommodation, insurance, etc.
- grants

Any academic questions should be referred to one of the [mobility advisers](#) in each of the seven faculties at UNIL.

We hope you enjoy reading the guide and look forward to welcoming you on campus at the start of the new semester.

Social Affairs and Student Mobility Office (SASME)

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# Welcome Day

The Social Affairs and Student Mobility Office (SASME) organises a welcome day for exchange students each semester. Traditionally, this takes place the week before classes resume.

This event is an opportunity for you to find out more about the various services available to you at UNIL (the sports centre, library, language centre, learning French as a foreign language, etc.) and the faculty that will be hosting you for your exchange. There will be a series of presentations during the information session, after which you will have the chance to visit various stands, followed by a social event.

SASME will send you an invitation by email in the weeks running up to the event.

# Visa and Residence Permits

## VISA FOR STUDIES

To check whether you need a visa, depending on your nationality, please see the [Swiss Confederation website](#).

If you wish to stay in Switzerland for more than 90 days for study purposes, you need to apply for a so-called "D" visa (or national visa) from the diplomatic representation (embassy or consulate) closest to your home. You must submit the application from your country of residence, before you arrive in Switzerland. A visa application takes between 2 and 3 months to be processed. You are therefore advised to submit your application in June at the latest for the start of the academic year in September (autumn semester) and in November for classes starting in February (spring semester).

A visa gives you permission to enter Switzerland but not permission to reside. You

will have to apply for a residence permit when you arrive in Switzerland in all circumstances (cf. below).

Citizens of European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Member States do not need a visa. They may enter Switzerland freely with a valid identity document but must inform the Bureau du contrôle de l'habitant/Office de la population in the administrative district where they are living on arrival in the country (cf. below).

## RESIDENCE PERMIT

You must register with the authorities in the commune where you are living within 14 days of arriving in Switzerland. When you register, the communal office will submit a request for a residence permit to the Service de la Population de Lausanne in the canton of Vaud. When you visit the communal office, you must in all cases complete a

cantonal declaration form (a blue "arrival declaration" form for citizens of EU/EFTA Member States or a yellow "arrival report" form for citizens of other countries).

A number of documents will also be required to make up your residence permit application, including an identity document, an existing residence permit if applicable, a civil status document, proof of accommodation, a registration certificate and proof of financial means (only for students who did not already have to provide this when applying for a D visa). Depending on your situation, other specific documents, such as an employment contract or passport-size photographs, may be required. Administrative fees may also apply.

Communal registration formalities for Lausanne, Crissier and Ecublens can be completed online to save time. However, you will



**Before you visit the Population office of the commune where you are living, please check the commune's website or contact them to find out exactly which documents you need to provide before you arrive. Requirements can vary from one district to another.**

still need to visit the office in person, even if you have pre-registered online (except for the commune of Lausanne where all the procedures can be done online).

Foreign students must register as primary residents; Swiss students must register as secondary residents.

Certificates of residence, which are issued while you are waiting for your residence permit, cannot be obtained immediately from communal offices. You will therefore have to go back to the office again later. Check with your commune to know how long it takes to issue, and how much it costs (variable from one municipality to another).

Finally, you will need to make an appointment at the [Biometry Centre](#) to enter your biometric data for your residence permit.

# Communal Registration Offices

## Lausanne

Service du contrôle des habitants  
Direction de la sécurité et  
de l'économie  
Rue du Port-Franc 18  
Case postale 5354  
1002 Lausanne

## Renens

Service de la population  
Rue de Lausanne 35  
1020 Renens

## Crissier

Commune de Crissier  
Ch. de Chisaz  
Case postale 146  
1023 Crissier 1

## St-Sulpice

Office communal de la population  
Rue du Centre 60  
Case postale 201  
1025 St-Sulpice

## Ecublens

Administration communale  
Chemin de la Colline 5  
Case postale 133  
1024 Ecublens VD

## Chavannes- près-Renens

Office de la population  
Case postale 36  
Avenue de la Gare 46  
1022 Chavannes-près-Renens

## Echandens

Contrôle des habitants  
Route de la Gare 4  
Case postale 77  
CH-1026 Echandens

## Morges

Contrôle des habitants  
Pl. de l'Hôtel-de-Ville 1  
Case postale 272  
1110 Morges 1

# Housing

## FONDATION MAISONS POUR ÉTUDIANTS LAUSANNE (FMEL)

The University of Lausanne does not currently have a hall of residence on campus. However, it works closely with [the Fondation Maisons pour Etudiants Lausanne \(FMEL\)](#), which welcomes over 3,000 students at 14 locations, mainly within the Lausanne urban area.

As far as possible, we try to secure accommodation for a part of our exchange stu-

dents in an FMEL hall of residence. However, since FMEL has a limited number of places available, we unfortunately cannot provide accommodation for all our exchange students. Priority is given to students from non-European countries and from universities with which UNIL has signed bilateral student exchange agreements. We cannot guarantee accommodation at the FMEL to students coming under the SEMP (Swiss-European Mobility Programme).

Therefore, once you have been nominated by your home university and been admitted to UNIL, we will let you know by the beginning of July at the latest, if you are arriving for the autumn semester, or

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*“My stay at the Vortex was a 100% positive experience: a secure place, ideally located a stone's throw from campus and the metro, with staff who are always responsive and helpful.” - Sristi, York University, Toronto, Canada*





the beginning of December, if you are arriving for the spring semester, whether we have been able to secure accommodation for you in an FMEL hall of residence. If so, we will contact you in good time to explain how to proceed so that you can choose your accommodation in one of its halls. You will be asked to pay a rent guarantee (see the “Rent guarantee” section for more information) and your rent will be payable by you. Please note that the deadline for paying your rent guarantee to the FMEL is very short. It is therefore essential to check your e-mails frequently during this period.

Note: you need to allow two months’ notice to terminate your tenancy agreement with the FMEL – for example, you must notify them on 31 March to move out on 31 May.

## UNIL-EPFL ACCOMMODATION DATABASE

If, unfortunately, we have not been able to secure accommodation through FMEL for you, the University of Lausanne and the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) run a [joint accommodation database](#) reserved exclusively for their students. Advertisements are published by individuals who want to let their accommodation or are looking for another tenant to share with.

If you don’t yet have your UNIL credentials to log in to the database before you arrive, our department can send you regular updates of the rooms advertised on the list, as a PDF file. If an advertisement interests you, just contact the person directly.

However, people generally want to meet the student who will be living with them and it is strongly recommended that you visit the accommodation concerned before you decide to rent it. As far as possible, it is advisable to arrive in Lausanne a few days before classes begin to carry out your re-

search and visit potential accommodation.

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*“I’m living in a shared house with six others in the Lausanne countryside. I found it through the UNIL/EPFL database—one of the housemates was leaving for a few months, making it the perfect opportunity for both of us.” – Elvire, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands*

Please note that the accommodation listed on our platform has not been inspected by the accommodation services at either UNIL or EPFL. They have, however, checked the advertisements, particularly with regard to price. We also try to identify any fake advertisements, which are designed to get you to hand over money for accommodation that does not actually exist. Despite our best efforts we cannot, unfortunately, ignore the possibility that a fake advertisement may slip through, given how cleverly they are written. Here are some tips to help you avoid any problems:

- Find out as much as you can about accommodation that seems too cheap compared with what else is available. For the sake of comparison, the average price of a room is around CHF 750 per month.
- As far as possible, always visit the accommodation before you take out a tenancy and pay any advance rent or a security deposit.
- Never transfer money through funds transfer organisations such as Western Union or MoneyGram.
- If you are asked for a rent guarantee or

initial rent payment, make the payment to an account held at a Swiss bank.



[See UNIL’s accommodation alternatives](#)

## RENT GUARANTEE

A rent guarantee (or deposit) is a sum of money, generally equivalent to three times your monthly rent, which must be deposited and blocked in a bank account at the request of a landlord (property company). The money can only be released and returned when you leave your accommodation, after the final inventory and sta-

tement of state of repair (agreed by the tenant and landlord at the end of the tenancy) has been signed, provided that you have not caused any damage to the accommodation and are not in arrears with your rent. Otherwise, the landlord can deduct the relevant amount from the sum deposited in the bank account, to pay for the repairs or cover unpaid rent.

Please note that a rent guarantee can represent a significant amount of money (for FMEL, allow CHF 1,200). If you do not have sufficient funds to deposit this amount of money in a bank account, there are companies that can provide a guarantee on your behalf (Swisscaution, Firstcaution, etc.). To use this service, you will have to pay an annual contribution to the company providing the guarantee. Most landlords are willing to use companies of this kind. However, FMEL does not accept this type of guarantee.





# Health and accident insurance



Health and accident insurance is compulsory in Switzerland. However, as a foreign student, it is possible to have your existing insurance recognised or, failing this, to take out specific insurance for foreign students at a reasonable price.

## EU/EFTA STUDENTS (B OR L PERMIT)

- Ask your insurance provider (social security, etc.) for a European Health Insurance Card if you do not already have one.
- Present your European Health Insurance Card and your student card (Campus Card) or proof of studies (certificate of enrolment) to [the Office Vaudois de l'Assurance-Maladie \(OVAM\)](#) for exemption from affiliation to a Swiss insurance scheme.
- Register with the [LAMal Common Institution \(KVG\)](#), which acts as a link between the care provider and the social security system in your country of origin. If you are treated in a public hospital and present your European insurance card, the invoice for the care you receive will generally be sent directly to the LAMal Common Institution, which will pay the service provider concerned and then apply for reimbursement from the insurance provider in your country of origin, subject to an excess of CHF 92.00 per 30-day period, which is payable by you (this means that you pay the first CHF 92.00 in each month of treatment).

If you go to a medical center or a private doctor - and in some cases in a public hospital - the bill will be sent to your place of residence and you will be able to claim reimbursement from the Institution Commune LAMAL (the amount of the bill minus the CHF 92.-).

- If you are over 25 years old and studying for a second qualification or a specialisation, you are not necessarily covered under the European Health Insurance Card scheme. Please contact the social security authorities in your home country for more information.

## Non-EU/EFTA STUDENTS (B OR L PERMIT)

- If you have health insurance in your home country, you can apply to the Office Vaudois de l'Assurance-Maladie (OVAM) for exemption from affiliation to a Swiss insurance scheme by [completing the form to check the equivalence of your existing cover](#). The form must be stamped and signed by your insurer, which must confirm that it offers similar cover to Swiss insurance (LAMal).
- If you do not have health insurance in your home country or if it does not offer

equivalent cover to Swiss insurance, you can take out a health insurance policy for international students in Switzerland, and then have it recognised by the OVAM (see above).

Note: health insurance policies for foreign students are not subject to the LAMal but the Federal Insurance Contracts Act (LCA). This means that they have the right to require a medical questionnaire when examining the student's application for insurance and are not under any obligation to accept them.

For further information, please visit [this page](#).

## Useful addresses

**Office vaudois de l'assurance-maladie**  
Chemin de Mornex 40  
1014 Lausanne  
+41 (0) 21 557 47 47  
[www.vd.ch/ovam](http://www.vd.ch/ovam)  
[info.ovam@vd.ch](mailto:info.ovam@vd.ch)

**Institut commune LAMal**  
Industriestrasse 78  
4600 Olten  
+41 (0) 32 625 30 30  
[www.kvg.org](http://www.kvg.org)  
[info@kvg.org](mailto:info@kvg.org)

# Opening a bank account

As an international student, you can open a bank account during your stay in Switzerland. Note that if you receive a mobility grant from UNIL, you must do so. To do this, you can choose any bank and go there with your passport or identity card, your certificate of enrolment at UNIL (which you can download from your 'Myunil' account), a rental agreement in your name or, if you do not have such an agreement (if you are subletting, for example), a certificate of domicile/residence (see the 'residence permit' section above) issued by your future commune of residence.

**It is important to know that banks may react differently to requests from foreign students to open an account.** Some banks may refuse to open an account if they consider that your stay is too short (less than 6 months) or require a large number of additional documents depending on your nationality (for example, for US citizens). If you are refused, do not hesitate to contact us or come to our office during reception hours.

# IT access & Student card

Your UNIL computer credentials are sent to you before the beginning of the semester by email to your personal address. Information on using [the IT services](#) available to you, and in particular the use of your MyUnil account. Once you have your credentials, you will be asked to validate your account; please follow the instructions provided in the email that contains your UNIL credentials.

Upon your arrival at UNIL, you must go to the SASME office to pick up your student card, called Campus Card.

Your student card will also need to be validated at one of the [dedicated terminals](#).

# Choice of classes

If you have any questions concerning the choice of classes you are intending to take at UNIL, you should contact [the Mobility Adviser in your Faculty or School](#). They will be able to tell you about class times or how to enrol for courses online.

Registration for courses and exams takes place in principle after the start of the semester. You can therefore attend any classes you choose during the first few weeks of the semester before you make a final decision.

For most courses, there is an exam during the session at the end of the semester (mid-January to early February for the autumn semester and mid-June to early July for the spring semester); some courses, however, do not have an exam at the end of the semester: in this case, you will be assessed continuously during the semester or on the basis of coursework to hand in. There are no exams at the end of the semester in the Faculty of Arts or the School of French as a Foreign Language (EFLE).



## TEACHING LANGUAGE

UNIL is a French-speaking university. The main teaching language is therefore French. However, some Master's programmes and several undergraduate classes are taught in English.

Most language and literature courses are taught in the language concerned.

## LISTE DE COURS ENSEIGNÉS EN ANGLAIS

Some courses at UNIL are delivered in English. You will find the list of classes taught in English on the [programmes' websites](#). For a more detailed description, please use the search engine below (select "English" in the "Teaching language" menu).



[Search courses](#)

[Courses catalogue by faculty and programme](#)

## LANGUAGE LEVEL

B2 level of the CEFR recommended for regular courses taught in French or English.

A1 level for the courses offered by the EFLE during the semester and for the intensive intersemester courses offered by *le Fil de l'EFLE*. EFLE offers only 2 complete beginner courses (A0 level) per semester, for a total of 5 ECTS credits.

No minimum level is required for the 4 week semi-intensive intersemester courses offered by *le Fil de l'EFLE* and the pre-semester



block courses for EFLE exchange students.

## CREDITS

UNIL uses ECTS credits. 60 ECTS credits represent one year of full-time study. Credits linked to a teaching unit (course or module) are only granted if the student passes the assessment for the unit concerned (written or oral examination, dissertation, continuous assessment, etc.).

Exchange students are obliged to take a **minimum of 15 ECTS credits per semester**. However, we recommend that you do not aim for more than 30 credits per semester.

## MARK SCHEME

The mark scheme goes from 0 to 6, where 6 is the highest and 4 is the pass mark.

# French classes

## SCHOOL OF FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFLE)

Your exchange at UNIL is an ideal opportunity to learn French or perfect your knowledge of the language. During your time here, you will be able to take French classes alongside your study plan or incorporate them into it.

The School of French as a Foreign Language (EFLE), which is part of the Faculty of Arts at UNIL, offers a free plan that has been specially designed for exchange students, which allows you to select credit-bearing courses from a vast range of options, while you are taking classes in your host faculty. When you enrol online, you will need to select the *Plan Libre EFLE* (EFLE free plan) option in addition to the main subject area you are going to study. Class enrolments take place shortly after the start of the semester.

You can find all the information you

need about the EFLE free plan on the Faculté of Arts' website. EFLE classes are free for UNIL students, exchange students included.

## INTENSIVE FRENCH

*Le Fil de l'EFLE* is a programme of the School of French as a Foreign Language (EFLE) which offers French language courses before the start of your exchange semester(s). These are 4-week sessions, in winter and summer, of courses (intensive, semi-intensive or complete beginners) combining theory and practice to give you the necessary basis for your stay and studies in Lausanne. Most courses are fee-paying and some modules can be used to obtain ECTS credits.

# Foreign language classes

The UNIL Language Centre offers a wide range of language courses to UNIL students, free of charge. When you enrol, you will be asked to take a test to determine your level in the language chosen. Enrolment with the Language Centre is entirely separate from your on-line enrolment before you arrive.

Some Language Centre courses may entitle you to ECTS credits. However, the courses you take will not appear on the final transcript sent to your home university.

Please see the [Language Centre](#) website for more information.

# Public transport and getting to the campus

The UNIL campus is in Dorigny, around 10 minutes by metro from the centre of Lausanne. The campus is served by three stops on Transports Lausannois (TL) line M1 (UNIL-Chamberonne, UNIL-Mouline and UNIL-Sorge), for easy access to the building you need on campus. You can buy individual tickets or a season ticket directly from the [TL website](#) or via the mobile app. TL also has offices in Flon, at the exit from metro lines M1 and M2.

Parking places on campus are limited and a fee is charged. Priority is given to students who live in areas that are further away and poorly served by public transport. You must register online before each semester. However, we strongly encourage you to avoid travelling to UNIL by car.







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# UNIL + EPFL Sport-Santé

The UNIL+EPFL Sport Santé Service is in the south of the campus, literally on the shore of the lake, and offers more than 120 indoor and outdoor sporting activities. Access to activities at the Sports Centre is free of charge for UNIL students, including exchange students.

An access card is issued by the administrative office of the Sports Department (Villa des sports) or can be obtained [online](#).



*The campus is very big and well distributed. If you are a person who loves to workout or does any sport is the right campus for you. – Rolando, Universidad de Pacífico, Peru*

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## Health & emergencies

[Health Center](#) is a service provided by UNIL and employs two nurses who offer free consultations.

**In the event of an emergency on campus,** please dial the following number from your mobile: +41 21 692 20 00. For any emergency off campus, please visit [this web page](#).



Anthropole building,  
Room 1056



+41 21 692 25 77



[accueilsante@unil.ch](mailto:accueilsante@unil.ch)

## ESN association

ESN-UNIL is an international students' association whose aim is to help exchange students settle in to their host institution. The ESN-UNIL branch organises a welcome week the week before the start of the academic year and runs a buddy scheme free of charge. This scheme is very useful for finding out how to take out a mobile phone contract in Switzerland, open a bank account, what formalities you need to complete with the commune where you live, etc.

The association also organises numerous events (parties, cultural outings, excursions, weekends, etc.) for exchange students throughout the year.

Its offices are in the Anthropole building (office 1128.1). For more information, please see the [association's website](#).





# Contacts



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+41 21 692 21 16

## Social Affairs and Student Mobility Office (SASME)



Unicentre Building  
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