

HANDBOOK FOR EXCHANGE STUDENTS

A guide to help students prepare for their exchange at the Université de Neuchâtel



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1 General information

1.1 Switzerland and Neuchâtel

Switzerland, a multilingual country in the heart of Europe, is known for its high-quality academic programmes. The University of Neuchâtel (UniNE) is located in the French-speaking part of the country, in a city that enjoys a central location: half an hour by train from the federal capital, Bern, and just over an hour from the economic capital of Zürich and the international city of Geneva.

Nestled at the foot of the Jura mountains, Neuchâtel faces the lake and offers a magnificent view of the Alps. The landscape, climate, culture and social life are all factors that make the area of Neuchâtel, with around 90,000 people, so attractive.

1.2 The UNINE in a nutshell

- Open to the world, with study programmes organized according to the Bologna system, and with a wide range of nationalities among teaching staff and students.
- Carefully supervised by internationally renowned professors, assistants and skilled academic advisors.
- A modestly sized institution, where people can get to know one another and exchange knowledge.
- A promoter of research, providing opportunities to work closely with doctoral students and researchers.
- In tune with the needs of society by offering education to meet current and future needs.
- Interdisciplinary, promoting multiple visions and knowledge-sharing.
- A provider of numerous effective services, such as housing, computer services, career and language centres, sports and cultural activities.

1.3 In figures

4 faculties (Humanities, Science, Law, Economics and Business)

24% of students are of foreign origin

CHF140.3 million (budget)

4'400 students

633 PhD students

2 Exchange programmes

The UniNE has more than a hundred cooperation agreements with universities around the world, and welcomes over a hundred exchange students every year, in a range of different courses on offer.

Student exchanges take place:

- in the framework of the Swiss-European Mobility Programme (Swiss measures for Erasmus+);
- in the framework of the Programme d'échange d'étudiants des établissements universitaires du Québec;
- in the framework of the exchange agreements (conventions) signed by the University of Neuchâtel and its partners.

Students from universities with which UniNE has not signed any formal partnership are also welcome as free mobility students.

3 Registration

3.1 Students from partner universities

Students from partner universities who wish to participate in an exchange with the UniNE should first contact the International Relations Office of their home university to find out more about the conditions pertaining to student exchanges.

Deadlines	<i>Autumn semester</i>	<i>Spring semester</i>
Nomination by the home university	APRIL 15	SEPTEMBER 15
Student applications	APRIL 30	SEPTEMBER 30

Procedures and forms on <http://www.unine.ch/mobilite/en/home/incoming-students.html>. Then select your exchange programme.

3.2 Students from non-partner universities

Students who come from non-partner universities must send their application files to the Study Exchange Office of the University of Neuchâtel. The required documents are:

- the application form;
- a covering letter (in English or in French, if you intend to take classes in French);
- a letter of recommendation from a member of the teaching staff (in French or English);
- a letter from your university authorizing you to participate in a student exchange at the UniNE (in French, English or German);
- proof of registration at the home university;
- academic transcripts (in French, English or German);
- the list of the courses attended at the home university (in French, English or German);
- a provisional [learning agreement](#) (15 ECTS min./semester).

Deadlines	<i>Autumn semester</i>	<i>Spring semester</i>
Student applications	MAY 15	SEPTEMBER 30

On receipt of the application, the Study Exchange Office sends it to the relevant faculty with a view to obtaining a notice of admission. Should this be approved, the Study Exchange Office then supplies candidates with all the information they will need regarding their period of study at the UniNE at least two months before the start of the semester.

4 Languages

4.1 Language of instruction

Courses are taught in French at Bachelor's level, with the exception for the Bachelor of Science in Economics and Business which offers courses in English in the 3rd year.

French remains the main language of instruction at Master's level. However, English and German are also used in some courses or even in full programmes.

Programmes in English: <http://www.unine.ch/unine/home/formation/masters-in-english.html>

Syllabus: <http://www10.unine.ch/descriptifs/>

4.2 Language requirements

- If students will be taking courses taught in **French**, they must prove that they have a **B2 level** as defined by the [Council of Europe](#). This does not apply if French is their mother tongue or if they have been following a study programme taught entirely in French for at least two years (in this case, they must provide us with a certificate from their home university).
- If they will only be taking French courses from the B.A. pilier français langue, they will need to prove that they have a **B1 level** in French as defined by the [Council of Europe](#)
- If they will be taking courses from the M.A. en lettres et sciences humaines, pilier français langue étrangère, they will need to prove that you have **C1 level** in French as defined by the [Council of Europe](#).
- If they will only be taking courses taught in English, they must prove that you have a **B2 level** as defined by the [Council of Europe](#). This does not apply if English is their mother tongue or if they have been following a study programme taught entirely in English for at least two years (in this case, they provide us with a certificate from their home university).
NB: Knowledge of French is not required but is strongly recommended to facilitate daily life.

4.3 Learning French

In addition to offering full- and part-time programmes, the Institute of French Language and Culture offers free French lessons of two hours per week to non-French speaking students at A1 to C1 levels, with a language laboratory and exercises in German-to-French and English-to-French translation.

Link: <https://www.unine.ch/ilcf/home/ilcf/francais-midi.html>

4.4 Learning other languages

The Language Centre offers courses in English and German, as well as multimedia independent learning language programs (in English, German, Italian and Spanish) and bilingual tandem arrangements.

Link: <https://www.unine.ch/cdl/en/home/auto-apprentissage.html>

5 Welcome programmes

The immersion training course takes place during the week preceding the autumn semester. The welcome days take place on the Friday and Saturday preceding the beginning of the spring semester. The Neuchâtel section of the Erasmus Student Network organizes many activities during these welcome programmes, as well as during the semester.

Welcome days offer opportunities to visit the faculties and the city, as well as social events.

6 Important dates and deadlines

	<i>Autumn semester</i>	<i>Spring semester</i>
Lecture period	Weeks 38-51	Weeks 8-22
Exams	Weeks 2-6	Weeks 23-25
Registration for courses	Weeks 38-41	Weeks 8-11
Registration for exams	Weeks 46-47	Weeks 15-16
Exam results	Week 6 (Science) Week 7 (other faculties)	Week 26 (Science) Week 27 (other faculties)

7 Your studies

7.1 Our credit system

ECTS – European credit transfer system

1 ECTS = 25-30 workload hours

Bachelor = 180 ECTS

Master = 90 or 120 ECTS

7.2 Choose your courses

To create a learning agreement, students should refer to the syllabus (“Descriptif des cours”).

Link: <http://www10.unine.ch/descriptifs/>

and consult the User’s Guide.

Link: <http://www.unine.ch/mobilite/en/home/incoming-students/studying-at-unine/course-program.html>

Incoming students are requested to take a minimum of **15 ECTS/semester**.

They are allowed to take a proportion of their courses (1/3) in another faculty or field of study. There may be prerequisites at Master’s level, to be verified by the relevant faculties.

It is also possible to select courses in the framework of BeNeFri at the University of Bern and/or at the University of Fribourg, as well as through the AZUR network at the University of Lausanne and/or at the University of Geneva. However, the majority of the courses (70%) must be taken at the University of Neuchâtel.

Courses are taught in French at Bachelor’s level, with the exception for the Bachelor of Science in Economics and Business which offers courses in English in the 3rd year.

Some Masters are totally or partially taught in English. Link:

<http://www.unine.ch/unine/home/formation/masters-in-english.html>

7.3 Exams

Registration for exams is mandatory. See *Important Dates and Deadlines*, above.

Exams take place after the lecture period.

- in January–February
- in June

Students who failed exams can retake them during the August-September remedial session (weeks 34-36, registration in week 27).

Exchange students who wish to **sit their exams in advance** can apply to the faculty secretariat at the very beginning of the semester. They must be aware that, depending on the professor and the course, the request will not necessarily be accepted.

7.3.1 Grading scale

Grade	Standard	
	In French	In English
6	excellent	excellent
5 1/2	très bien	very good
5	bien	good

4 1/2	satisfaisant	satisfactory
4	passable	pass
3 1/2 (and less)	insuffisant	fail

7.3.2 Academic transcripts

Academic transcripts are available on students' IS-Academia accounts on the day the results are issued (see *Important Dates and Deadlines*, above). Students must send them to the home university themselves, as the UNINE will not do so.

8 Practical information

8.1 Accommodation

The University of Neuchâtel is located in the heart of the city and has no campus in the strict sense of the word.

Students live either in residences, homestay arrangements or shared apartments; they can also register for the Appart-Âges programme, which aims to create links between generations.

The Neuchâtel region is relatively unaffected by the problems of accommodation and accessibility experienced elsewhere in Switzerland.

Every effort is made to secure as much accommodation as possible. We recommend that you find accommodation before the academic year begins, and urge you to begin looking as soon as possible.

The average cost of a room or a studio varies from CHF400.00 to CHF900.00 per month.

Link: <https://www.unine.ch/social/accommodation>

8.2 Budget

Monthly estimated expenditure for an exchange student	in Swiss francs	
	Min.	Max.
Study material	30.00	30.00
Regular outgoings		
International sickness/accident cover (non EU students)	50.00	100.00
Travel expenses (travel cards, scooter or bike)	10.00	200.00
Personal expenses		
Clothes/shoes	70.00	100.00
Hairdresser/hygiene care	30.00	50.00
Pocket money/mobile phone	150.00	200.00
Supplementary expenses		
Medical expenses/doctor/dentist/optician	50.00	50.00
Accommodation		
Rent, including bills (electricity, phone, insurance, mandatory radio and TV licence)	400.00	800.00
Meals	350.00	500.00
Cleaning fees	20.00	40.00
Total	1,160.00	2,070.00

8.3 Visas

Students who are from a third country (i.e non-EU or EFTA member) must apply for a visa to stay in Switzerland. **The nationality of the students is decisive and not the country of their home university.**

The visa application must be submitted to the Swiss representation **in the student's country of origin** at least three months before the planned arrival in Switzerland. Depending on the country of origin, a financial guarantee is sometimes required in the form of a financial affidavit.

Which documents or information should be provided?

- Certificate of enrolment as an exchange student from the University of Neuchâtel (before submitting an application for admission to Switzerland, the student must be in possession of a definitive admission certificate);
- Study plan, including duration;
- Curriculum vitae;
- Copies of diplomas, school certificates or other certificates obtained;
- A formal written commitment to leave Switzerland at the end of the period of residence;
- Proof of financial means:
 - a financial affidavit, where a bank attests to sufficient financial resources to cover the costs for a study period in Switzerland (at least equivalent to CHF20,000 for a full academic year);
 - or a firm guarantee of a sufficient scholarship or training grant with a copy of the documents relating to the grant [decision, amount, duration] for at least CHF1,500 per month.
- A copy of the student's passport;
- A letter of motivation stating precisely the reasons for choosing to follow a programme of study in Switzerland and stating for the future when the period of study ends.

The documents provided must be translated into a Swiss national language and authenticated by the Swiss representation.

Link: https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/publiservice/weisungen-kreisschreiben/visa/liste1_staatsangehoerigkeit.html

8.4 Insurance

8.4.1 Health and accident insurance

All students must be insured against sickness and accidents. The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is usually sufficient. Non-European students will need proof they have the necessary insurance coverage or will have to take out international insurance for students.

Link: <http://www.unine.ch/mobilite/en/home/incoming-students/your-stay-at-neuchatel/assurance-maladie.html>

8.4.2 Liability

Liability insurance is not compulsory in Switzerland, but it is strongly recommended. In some situations, you may be required to show proof of liability insurance (e.g. for your accommodation). This insurance covers you against damage and injury caused to third parties.

9 Social activities

9.1 Sports

Approximately 110 courses in almost 60 different disciplines are offered each week. Neuchâtel's geographical location is perfect for a multitude of outdoor sports, including skiing, snowshoeing, golf, tennis, team sports and sailing, to name just a few. In addition to traditional sports, including personal fitness, the UniNE also offers disciplines such as aikido, capoeira and different types of dance activities. Most sports programmes are free, or provided at very competitive prices.

Link: <http://www10.unine.ch/sun/>

9.2 Culture

There are many associations offering cultural activities such as music, theatre and cinema on campus.

Link: <https://www.unine.ch/etudier/discover/activities>

10 Contact

10.1 Study Exchange Office

Study Exchange Office

Avenue du 1er-Mars 26

CH-2000 Neuchâtel

T.+41 32 718 10 85

bureau.mobilite@unine.ch

10.2 Study advisors (information regarding courses and exams)

Faculty of Law

conseil.droit@unine.ch

Faculty of Humanities

conseil.lettres@unine.ch

Faculty of Science

conseil.sciences@unine.ch

Faculty of Economics and Business

etudes.seco@unine.ch

10.3 Erasmus Student Network – Neuchâtel section

For any tips regarding the daily life in Neuchâtel, don't hesitate to contact the students of ESN

Email: esn.neuchatel@unine.ch

Website : <https://neuchatel.esn.ch/>

We look forward to greeting you at Neuchâtel.
See you very soon !