Welcome to Zurich!

It’s a great pleasure to welcome you to the family that makes up the Department of Geography at the University of Zurich. You are at the start of the journey to a PhD, and this booklet, produced by the Zurich Graduate School in Geography, is one way in which your new family wants to help you on that journey. It provides you with information on your new (or old) home, both in terms of day to day life in Zurich and within the University of Zurich. We hope that it will ease your way through the inevitable paper chase of matriculation, and should help you understand what sort of insurance you will need in one of the most insured countries in the world! You can find out how to get free Wireless access almost anywhere in Switzerland, and we suggest some ways of spending your free time. Of course, in Switzerland public transport is a great way of getting around, and we introduce you to the Half-Fare Card as well as the (in)famous yellow eye! Finally, we provide you with a few useful phrases in Schwyzerdütsch (and German). If you have ideas for useful information that’s missing from this booklet, let us know and we will include it in the next update.

Best wishes,

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Coordinator
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Switzerland, Zurich and the University of Zurich

Switzerland lies in the heart of Europe, south of Germany, east of France, north of Italy and west of Liechtenstein and Austria. Its geographical location impacts Swiss culture.

Switzerland famously has four official languages, but many more languages are regularly spoken. German (63.7% of the population), French (20.4%) and Italian (6.5%) are dominant. The fourth official language, Romansh, is not spoken by many people anymore (0.5%). Strong minority languages are the Slavic languages from former Yugoslavia (1.5%), Albanian (1.3%), Portuguese (1.2%), Spanish (1.1%), English (1%) and Turkish (0.6%). For the spatial distribution of the official languages see below map.

The official languages of Switzerland

- German
- French
- Italian
- Romansh
Territorially, Switzerland is divided into 26 cantons (23 cantons and 6 half-cantons: Appenzell Innerrhoden/Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Basel-Stadt/ Basel-Land, Nidwalden/Obwalden). Since Switzerland has strong federalism, cantons have much power; this sometimes leads to laws and regulations differing from canton to canton.

The Swiss climate is temperate, but varies regionally and with altitude, of course. Summers are warm and humid, while the winters are usually cold (with snow) and can be foggy especially in the lowlands. The depiction top right shows the climate diagram of Bern.

While Bern is the political capital of Switzerland, Zurich is often considered the economic capital. Zurich lies in what is called “Mittelland” (the flatter, crescent-shaped part of Switzerland between Jura and Alps). The canton of Zurich has a population of 1.3 million (17.3% of Switzerland) and an area of 1,729 km² (4.1%). The city of Zurich (capital of the canton) has about 380,000 inhabitants. Through immigration and a specialised service industry with international companies, Zurich, despite its limited size, has an international, metropolitan air. Various theatres, clubs, concert halls, galleries, museums and educational institutions enrich the cultural life. The location of Zurich near the centre of the German-speaking part of Switzerland is geographically attractive. You can travel quickly to all corners of Switzerland or to adjacent countries. In the summer you can bathe in Lake Zurich or in the river Limmat, in the winter you can easily reach various alpine ski resorts.

With 24,000 students and 1,900 graduates every year, the University of Zurich (www.uzh.ch) is Switzerland’s largest university. Together with ETH (or the Federal Institute of Technology, www.ethz.ch) it is the most prominent of Zurich’s educational institutions. Two thousand lecturers in 140 special institutes provide the broadest range of subjects and courses available from any Swiss seat of higher education. Through collaboration the University offers its members access not only to its own institutions but also to facilities, libraries and archive collections of the ETH.
The University’s facilities are distributed over three locations: the Main Campus (UZZ, Universität Zürich Zentrum) near the city centre, the Irchel Campus (UZI, Universität Zürich Irchel; where our department is located) and the premises in Oerlikon. Below is an aerial photograph of the Irchel campus.
The Irchel Campus

The Irchel Campus is located in the north of the city of Zurich. It is well connected to public transport via trams no. 7, 9, 10, 14 and busses no. 69, 72 (about 15 minutes from the main station). The Department of Geography is located in building 25.

The campus itself does not host student homes. For housing in Zurich refer to the respective section on page 19. The campus features a nice park with some ponds and meadows.

The Irchel Campus addressing system works as follows. A room address like e.g. Y25J84 translates to:
The Department of Geography

Organisation

The Department of Geography (www.geo.uzh.ch) is part of the Faculty of Science (www.mnf.uzh.ch, MNF, Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät) of the University. So far no English acronym for the Department of Geography has been established. Thus, the German acronym GIUZ (Geographisches Institut der Universität Zürich) is sometimes used. The same is the case for the Faculty of Science where the German acronym MNF (“Mathematisch-naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät”) is used.

The Department is divided into three research fields with three subordinate units, each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Geography</th>
<th>Human Geography</th>
<th>Methodological Geography</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glaciology, Geomorphodynamics and Geochronology (3G)</td>
<td>Human Geography (HGg)</td>
<td>Geographic Information Systems (GIS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Science and Biogeography (2B)</td>
<td>Political Geography (PGg)</td>
<td>Geographic Information Visualization and Analysis (GIVA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrology and Climate (H2K)</td>
<td>Economic Geography (WGg)</td>
<td>Remote Sensing Laboratories (RSL)</td>
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The Zurich Graduate School in Geography

Situated within the Department of Geography, the Zurich Graduate School in Geography (www.geo.uzh.ch/en/graduate-school) offers you the possibility to study for a doctoral degree. The Graduate school website is the first point of reference for PhD students and supervisors. There you can find information related to its objectives, admission requirements, the curriculum, deadlines, forms and funding possibilities. To be admitted to the Zurich Graduate School you either need your own funding or you need to be hired by one of the units of the Department.

Once you have enrolled in the Graduate School you will have to attend a mandatory course, PhD Seminar I, where you will learn more about regulations and the process of obtaining a degree from the Department of Geography of the University of Zurich.
News and events

University-wide events are listed in the University of Zurich Agenda (www.agenda.uzh.ch). The University also lists semester dates (www.uzh.ch/studies/dates_en.html) along with Swiss national and cantonal holidays.

You will receive a departmental newsletter, once you are employed. This is the main news source. Past newsletters are available online along with past annual reports.

Every semester there is what is called MAV (Mitarbeiterversammlung; employees’ assembly) where new employees are welcomed and news regarding the department announced.

Regarding socialising there is (mostly in the warm season) the so-called DoBar (Thursday bar) where everybody can join. Dates for this are often announced somewhat informally for example via e-mail or broadcast on the website of the Association of Geography Students (http://www.geoteam-uzh.ch).

Coffee room

The Department of Geography has its own coffee room (Y25L11) – an important point of social contact within the Department – with a good coffee machine, kettle, fridge, microwave, some tables, a comfy couch and newspapers. Cups, dishes and cutlery are provided. Please wash and return whatever you use. Tokens for the coffee machine can be purchased very cheaply at the Department’s secretariat (Y25K13).
Administration with the University and Faculty of Science

The admission procedure is a bit more complicated for foreign students (explained in more detail below) than for domestic ones. However, in any case a good starting point is the website of the Office of the Dean of Studies (www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/studies/students/doctoral-studies-at-mnf.html).

Admission procedure for foreign students

Once selected as a research person by the professor, foreign students have to perform the following to formally be admitted to the University. The process is slightly longer if you are not from foreign partner institutions in Austria, France, Germany and Italy. Make sure you check the MNF website (www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/studies/students/doctoral-studies-at-mnf.html) in time, since you may need to hand in extensive documents!

The process consists of three parts:

Step 1: Application for the recognition of a foreign degree
Among other documents you will need your Master’s thesis and the application form for the recognition of a foreign degree.

Step 2: Admission application
Among other documents you will need a copy of the confirmation you received after Step 1 and a confirmation (receipt) of the payment of the admission fee. Most of the required documents will need to be attested (and maybe translated); The attestation is done by Mrs. Cornelia Schmid of the Office of the Dean of Studies.

Step 3: Matriculation
Once you have finished the above procedure, be in touch with Mrs. Cornelia Schmid. The University will send you a letter with the requirements, date/time and place for the “Persönliche Immatrikulation” (Matriculation).

The required forms for these procedures can be obtained from the offices of the Dean of Studies of the Faculty of Science (MNF) (Y10G23 on Irchel campus) or downloaded from the MNF website (www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/studies/students/doctoral-studies-at-mnf.html). We recommend making contact with Cornelia Schmid from MNF for the details of the procedure:
Matriculation renewal every semester

Once you have registered with the University, you will have to remember to renew your admission every semester. At the start of the semester you will receive a reminder email with details how to do the online renewal. As soon as you have paid the semester fee and received the confirmation you should re-validate your UZH Card (“Legi”; see also the next section).

UZH Card

The UZH Card (in German: “Legi”) (www.uzhcard.uzh.ch) is your ID in the University. After you matriculate for your PhD studies you will receive the UZH Card by post. Before using it, the card needs to be validated at one of the validation stations. There is a plan of these stations in Irchel and a plan of stations in all campus locations (www.uzhcard.uzh.ch/validierstationen.html). You will want to look for the following icon in these:

Validation has to be carried out every semester after paying the semester fees.

Always carry your UZH Card with you. With it you benefit from lower prices in the University mensa (also in other mensas of the University, not only on Irchel, and also in ETH mensas), have access to libraries and sports facilities (if you paid the ASVZ fee; see
the section “Sports”) and may also profit from student rebates outside the University. The UZH Card is also your ID when you decide to work late and run into one of the security guards.

Should you lose your UZH Card or should it get damaged, contact one of the UZH Card Information Desks (www.uzhcard.uzh.ch/contact.html).
University facilities

Libraries


Main Library of the University of Zurich: http://www.hbz.uzh.ch

The locations of the two Main Library subsidiaries on Irchel Campus are depicted below. Documents in these and many more libraries affiliated with the University of Zurich can be found in IDS: http://biblio.unizh.ch/F. You will have to register and create an account before you can make reservations.

Forschungsbibliothek (FBI)  Studienbibliothek (SBI)

Main Library of the ETH Zurich: http://www.ethbib.ethz.ch/index_e.html. Documents in this and many more libraries affiliated with the ETH Zurich can be found in NEBIS (www.nebis.ch). You will have to register and create an account before you can make reservations.

Some Units of the Department additionally have their own libraries (e.g. LB library of RSL, Q-library of GIS/GIVA). Ask your advisor about these.

When you borrow/reserve a book or document you can choose to have it sent to you (this usually costs 10 Francs) or to pick it up at one of the libraries. If you only want to have some pages out of a book you can place a scanning request and have the document delivered to you via e-mail as PDF (this usually costs 6 Francs). When you want to pick up a reservation, make sure to have your UZH Card (“Legi”) with you; this is your library ID, too.
There are different units you will interact with which occupy themselves with the provision of computing services.

First of all, there are the IT Services (www.id.uzh.ch) of the University (website only in German). The website has a section New at the Uni? (www.id.uzh.ch/neu.html) which (again in German) may be helpful in setting up some things.

If you were a student at the University of Zurich before starting your PhD you will already have an S-account (“Student”; e.g. s1234567) and should be familiar with the University’s IT environment. As a PhD student you will also receive an M-account (“Mitarbeiter”/employee; e.g. m1234567). If you came here only for your PhD studies, you will also be provided with both an S- (when you matriculate) and an M-account (when you are hired). More formally both these kinds of accounts are referred to as UniAccess accounts (www.access.uzh.ch). They are equivalent in their functionality and are important for accessing certain university services.

Along with the account you get an e-mail address. As a default this will be <your_account>@access.uzh.ch, but you can choose an alias once. There is a web interface for this e-mail: http://webmail.uzh.ch. You may want to forward this address to your e-mail address at the Department of Geography or read it with your desktop software using POP or IMAP access. In any case make sure that you receive the UniAccess e-mails – depending upon configuration you may receive important e-mails there (e.g. about matriculation renewal, university events, online learning courses, etc.).

The University also offers software (www.id.uzh.ch/dl/sw/angebote.html) with a campus licence such as Matlab, McAfee VirusScan, SAS, SPSS, iWork.

Further, the University offers access to its services from outside the university for example via proxy server (www.id.uzh.ch/dl/web/proxy.html) or VPN connection (www.id.uzh.ch/dl/mobil/zugaenge/vpn.html). These services allow you for example to access content (e.g. scientific journals) licensed to University libraries from home. A VPN connection to the University is also a requirement to make a remote login on the Department’s Windows Servers when you are outside the Department. The University also offers Wireless LAN (www.id.uzh.ch/dl/mobil/wlan.html) on the campuses with a good coverage.
Authentication can again be done using a **VPN connection** or directly in your browser.

Additionally, several commercial providers grant students and employees affiliated with the University WLAN access at hotspots throughout Switzerland. The companies are **Swisscom**, **Monzoon**, **the Net** and **TPN**. These services are free of charge! The four companies offer “WLAN Locators” (maps where public WLANs are indicated) on their individual websites.

Your UniAccess account also grants you access to the **Module Booking System** of the University (www.students.uzh.ch/booking_en.html) where you can enrol in courses offered by the University.

Also, you can access **OLAT** (www.olat.uzh.ch, Online Learning And Training) where you may have to register to specific courses (depending upon the course and organisers). Different courses take advantage of the OLAT system to a different degree. You may enrol in a course which uses OLAT only for registration purposes (for example, the Zurich Graduate School in Geography tends to do this) or in a course which uses the full range of online learning and collaboration opportunities such as forums, group discussions, self-tests, etc.

Specific to our Department there are the internal IT services. As a PhD student of the Department you should apply for a so-called GIUZ account using the **Account Request Form** (you need GIUZ credentials to access this website). (At the time of writing, this form is accessible only to people who already have a GIUZ account. Thus you should ask your advisor to print it for you.) Alternatively, you can use the form which should have come with this brochure.

Along with the account you get an e-mail address. As a default this will be <firstname.surname>@geo.uzh.ch. There is a web interface for this e-mail: http://webmail.geo.uzh.ch.

The Department’s IT has a single point of entry, namely http://it.geo.uzh.ch. There it publishes the status of systems and services, IT-related news and the link to the **IT Wiki**.
The IT Wiki is your most important resource about computing in the Department. It gives information about services, the infrastructure, how to order hardware, e-mail configuration, printing, how to obtain OSs and software from the Department, servers, remote access and much more.

Another Wiki details information about geodata which are available in the Department (in German).

If you run into IT problems you can contact your appointed IT Guru (https://it.wiki.geo.uzh.ch/ItGurus) or the Department IT via e-mail (computer-help@geo.uzh.ch) or via phone (55888). Their office is located in Y25L12.

**Rooms and projectors**

For reserving the (seminar or lab) rooms of the Department (for example, for non-regular meetings, colloquia or presentations) and projectors (there are three available) you can use the booking tool at [http://rooms.geo.uzh.ch](http://rooms.geo.uzh.ch). The projectors are stored in the low cupboard on your left upon entering Y25J53 (an otherwise ordinary office).

Units within the Department may have their own meeting rooms. In those cases refer to your advisor on how to book those.

**Further education**

The University offers various opportunities for further education. Some of these are also referred to on the Graduate School website (www.geo.uzh.ch/en/graduate-school).

- Language Center ([www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch](http://www.sprachenzentrum.uzh.ch))
- Center for University Teaching and Learning ([www.afh.uzh.ch](http://www.afh.uzh.ch))
- Transferable Skills ([www.ueberfachliche-kompetenzen.uzh.ch](http://www.ueberfachliche-kompetenzen.uzh.ch))
- Courses by the IT Services ([www.id.uzh.ch/dl/schulung.html](http://www.id.uzh.ch/dl/schulung.html))
- Mentoring ([www.mentoring.uzh.ch](http://www.mentoring.uzh.ch))
- Courses of the University of Zurich ([www.vorlesungen.uzh.ch](http://www.vorlesungen.uzh.ch))

Obviously, understanding and speaking German is really helpful for getting around especially in these parts of Switzerland. Also, it is the primary language of teaching at the University on the undergraduate level. We thus recommend strongly to engage in some German learning activity (for example, at the University’s Language Center) as soon as you arrive in Zurich. Once you have attained a certain level, consider also encouraging your
colleagues to speak more German to you (often they don’t realise that new people are learning German and that they are probably rather quickly much better at it than anticipated).

**Sports**

When you matriculate at the University of Zurich you can agree to pay a fee for ASVZ (www.asvz.ethz.ch, Akademischer Sportverband Zürich). If you choose to do so, the services of ASVZ are available to you. ASVZ offers an incredibly broad range of sports (about 80) and training facilities to students and staff of the University and ETH. You can also enrol in courses and training camps (usually at an additional fee). When you want to use the ASVZ facilities you need to carry your UZH card (“Legi”, http://www.uzhcard.uzh.ch) with the ASVZ Logo (certifying payment of the fee) with you.

The Department of Schools and Sports (www.stadt-zuerich.ch/ssd) of the city of Zurich provides information (in German) about sports facilities for the public. You can for example find a [map of swimming baths](#) in Zurich.

**Food and drinks**

The mensa on the Irchel campus hosts a [website detailing the daily menus](mensauni.irchel.zfv.ch). Besides, one can also get Asian food usually in the cafeteria Atrium. Further there is the main cafeteria called Seerose (right beneath mensa) and another cafeteria called Brunnenhof.


**Insurances**

There are several insurances which you need to have or at least should consider buying.

**Compulsory Health Insurance**

Anyone staying in Switzerland longer than three months has to have a health insurance. Students from EU with a health insurance in their home country can apply for exemption by using the European Health Card or a provisional certificate issued by the health insurance company in their home country. If you do not have a provisional certificate or an insurance card, but other proof of health insurance corresponding to Swiss requirements, an exemption from obligatory insurance may be possible.

After arrival in Switzerland you will be contacted by the health services department of your place of residence. If you should not be contacted, please ask your local authorities about the procedure. If not, a policy for basic insurance must be taken out at a Swiss health insurance company. Comparis (www.comparis.ch) is a good starting point for comparing health insurance offers.

You can find more information issued by the University (www.uzh.ch/studies/student life/insurances_en.html) and by the ETH (www.rektorat.ethz.ch/students/immigration/en_insurance_faq.pdf). The students’ Advisory Office (www.uzh.ch/rebeko/krabe.html, in German) offers help concerning health insurance matters.

**AHV, IV, EO, ALV**

With old-age pensions, the AHV (Old Age and Survivors’ Insurance) helps to assure insured persons of a financially secure retirement (beside pension funds and private savings). The survivors’ pensions is designed to prevent financial distress being added to the human grief that the death of a parent or a spouse causes to a family.

Basically, every foreign citizen earning an income in Switzerland is required to contribute to the Swiss AHV (“Alters- und Hinterbliebenenversicherung”) / IV (Invalidity Insurance, “Invaliditätsversicherung”). Furthermore, every foreign citizen with an income is contributory to the unemployment contributions (ALV, Unemployment insurance, “Arbeitslosenversicherung”) as well as the income replacement scheme for persons performing their military and civil service (EO, Income Replacement Scheme, “Erwerbsersatzordnung”), although they themselves are not liable for military service in Switzerland.
These contributions are shared equally between the employee (deducted from the salary) and the employer.

Should you have any questions regarding these, you can contact the Social Insurance Office (SVA, www.svazurich.ch/home_en.cfm) of the Canton of Zurich which also offers information on how to claim payment of pensions you accumulate during your working period (www.svazurich.ch/index/index.cfm?page=akb_ausland&sprache=en). The Human Resources of the University also offer some information (in German) on these insurances (www.pa.uzh.ch/Vorgesetzte/gg1/ahv.html). On the website of the Federal Office of Migration (BFM) you can find a brochure about social insurances in various languages (www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/dokumentation/publikationen.html#sozialversicherung)

**Private Liability Insurance**

This insurance (“Haftpflichtversicherung”) covers damage or injury inflicted by you to other persons. When bundled with a Household Effects Insurance (“Hausratversicherung”) it also covers any loss incurred in the room or flat you are living in. A private liability insurance costs from 100 to 150 Francs per year with a limit of indemnity of up to 5 million Francs. Private liability insurance is not compulsory. However, it may be a good idea to buy such an insurance. Comparis (www.comparis.ch) is a good starting point for comparing private liability insurance offers.

**Bicycle Insurance**

There is also a compulsory liability insurance for bicycles (“Fahrradversicherung”, www.uzh.ch/studies/studentlife/insurances_en.html). Note that bicycles are not covered by ordinary private liability insurance. Each year in spring one has to buy a sticker (costing about 5 Francs; you can see a picture on the left. The actual sticker which goes on the bike is framed in red.) from the post office or from retail shops and stick them onto one’s bike. The Police in Zurich sometimes control these and you can be fined, if your bike has no sticker. At the time of writing, a political discussion is taking place which may
lead to this system being abandoned and damages you cause with your bicycle being covered by the ordinary liability insurance.

**Rega**

Rega (www.rega.ch) is a Swiss air rescue service which works on a non-profit basis. For financial support it depends on patrons. For 30 Francs per year you can become a patron (there are discounts for couples and families).

In return for patronage Rega will cover certain emergency costs for you if your health insurance or other insurances or liable persons do not cover the costs (fully). This encompasses among others air rescue flights, rescue missions by the Swiss Alpine Club, search missions for missed persons together with the Police, counseling with regard to medical problems when abroad and medical repatriation flights from abroad. For details have a look at the [Rega website](https://www.rega.ch/en/). The number for contacting Rega in case of an emergency is 1414. If you do not own a cell-phone with a Swiss SIM card you should dial +41 333 333 333. Rega also has an [information leaflet](https://www.rega.ch/en/dateien/rega/PDF_Merkblatt_en_07.pdf) describing situations when it is advisable to call Rega for assistance (and when it is not) as well as instructions on how to prepare the landing site for the air rescue helicopter.
Living in Zurich

Housing

It can be very difficult to find accommodation in Zurich. A good point of contact is the Housing Office (www.wohnen.ethz.ch) of both the University and the ETH. The Housing Office also maintains a list of useful links for those searching accommodation. For example, the students blackboard (www.marktplatz.uzh.ch) of University and ETH, which also has other classifieds, as well as the Student Housing Association (www.woko.ch, Woko; here, PhD students are only allowed a maximum stay of two years) are linked to. Additionally, the University and ETH maintain special housing opportunities for newly arrived (prospective) PhD students where you can stay for 6 to 12 months. To take advantage of this programme you need to apply via a form and submit a confirmation that you are a PhD student. There is also an information website by the University which details approximate costs of living in Zurich.

Registration with authorities

Before travelling to Switzerland make sure to study the visa requirements (www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/themen/einreise.html) issued by the Federal Office of Migration (BFM) in time and refer to the list of representations of Switzerland (www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/themen/einreise/adressen/schweizer_vertretungen.html) abroad. Work permit regulations (www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/themen/arbeit.html) can also be seen on the BFM website.

On arrival in Switzerland you need to register within 8 days at the Residents’ Registration Office (www.stadt-zuerich.ch/prd/en/index/bevoelkerungsamt/personenmeldeamt.html) of your district (in the city of Zurich). Zurich is divided into 12 districts; ask your neighbours, flatmates, landlord or landlady or refer to the list of “Kreisbüros” (in German; also shows opening hours and locations) to find the Residents’ Registration Office which is responsible for you. If you live outside the city of Zurich you must register at your Municipal Administration Office (“Gemeindeverwaltung”). If you choose to move during your studies, you will have to re-register with your Residents’ Registration Office.

Further information (in German) can also be found on the website of the Migration Office of the canton of Zurich.
Advisory centres

There are several advisory centres at your disposal for advice on, for example, financial matters, disabilities, legal matters, gender matters, psychological problems, insurance questions and career topics. The UZH hosts a good overview (www.uzh.ch/studies/studentlife/advice_en.html) of these.

Driving license

If you have a driving license from another country, you need to change it into a Swiss driving license within one year (if you don’t, you will have to re-take the driving test). The application for this should be filed in due time, since the process can take a while. The procedure is described on the website of the Strassenverkehrsamt of the canton of Zurich (www.stva.zh.ch/internet/ds/stva/de/dienstleistungen/ausweise/aw_auslfa.html). There you can also download the necessary form which you need to complete including a portrait photo and an eyesight test. All information and the form are in German.

Public transport

Zurich and Switzerland have a reliable public transport system. If you want to get around by public transport, purchasing a subscription ticket is very much recommended. For Switzerland SBB (www.sbb.ch, Swiss Federal Railway) is your point of contact, for Zurich the ZVV (www.zvv.ch, wider area) or VBZ (www.vbz.ch, city).

Regarding subscription tickets, for Switzerland there is for example the Half-Fare Card (Halbtax Abo) which reduces train fares by 50%. For Zurich (and surroundings) the ZVV NetworkPass is an attractive offer.

Should you have a subscription ticket but forgot it at home, you can show an ID. The conductor will hand you a slip of paper which you can show later at your local train station along with your subscription ticket. In such a case you won’t be fined and will only have to pay 5 Francs expense.

When you board an Intercity, Interregio, ICN and some other trains (basically: fast trains), you can buy your ticket on the train, with an additional small fee. Whenever you see a yellow sign depicting a stylised eye, however, you have to have a ticket before you board the vehicle. In general, it is safer and cheaper to buy public transport tickets before boarding.
Tickets can be bought over the counter both for SBB and ZVV or at ticket machines such as those depicted on the left. For SBB there is also a solution where you can buy your ticket using your cellphone (www.sbb-mobileworld.ch).

Online timetables are available both from SBB and ZVV. Especially the one by ZVV also encompasses tram, bus and ship connections:

http://fahrplan.sbb.ch
http://www.zvv.ch/en

For travelling to the Irchel campus the tram/bus stops “Zürich, Milchbuck”, “Zürich, Universität Irchel” are relevant (see plan on page 5 for the location of these).

Beware, being caught in public transport without a valid ticket usually entails a pretty expensive fine (also you are filed and fined even more for subsequent incidents). Not understanding or speaking German doesn’t save you from this.

Money

Speaking of fares and fines and thus, effectively, money: If you are unsure and want to be on the safe side regarding the Swiss currency, the Swiss National Bank hosts a website detailing banknotes and coins (www.snb.ch) and their security features. Swiss banknotes come in values of 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 1000 Francs. So better don’t accept (or use) a 30 or 300 Franc note! Coins come in values of 5, 2, 1, 0.50, 0.20, 0.10, 0.05 Francs. Abbreviations for “Franc” are “Fr.”, “SFr.” or “CHF”. 1 Franc is 100 cents or “Rappen” in German. Presently, 1 Swiss Franc equals 0.90 US$.

For paying bills you will usually receive what is called “Einzahlungsschein” (see the example on the right).
With this slip of paper you can go to a post office and pay your bill using cash or some debit card. If you have an online banking account you can also make your payments using that.

For receiving salary payments you will need to open a bank account. In Switzerland there are obviously numerous options for you, some of which are Zürcher Kantonalbank (ZKB), Raiffeisenbank, Alternative Bank, PostFinance (not strictly a bank). Depending upon where you are from, you can open accounts online with some institutes. As a student you can get special accounts in most banks with, for example, higher interest rates – ask about student offers! Consider also the FAQ by the Swiss Bankers Association (www.swissbanking.ch/en) and their overview of Swiss banks.

Post

You can find post-offices and letterboxes throughout the country and city of Zurich. The Post website (www.post.ch) gives information about services, costs, locations and opening hours. Swiss Post has still a monopoly on relatively light letters (< 50 grams). The market for parcels and heavier letters, however, has been privatised.

Telephone

There are various telecommunication companies in Switzerland. As with insurances, Comparis (www.comparis.ch) can serve as a starting point to find an offer which suits you. Note that installing a landline can be costly for foreign students, since the telecommunication company may ask you to pay a deposit.

Electricity

If you want to bring appliances to Switzerland, you will want to make sure they are compatible to the electricity provided here (or to buy a plug adapter, converter or transformer). Switzerland (users.telenet.be/worldstandards/electricity.htm) uses plugs and sockets of types C (with pins up to 4 mm diameter) and J, 230 Volt, 50 Hz.

Drinking water, rubbish disposal

All water can be drunk except if there is a label saying “Kein Trinkwasser / Eau non-potable” (which can be the case, for example, with fountains; but even there it is seldom).
For rubbish disposal in Zurich you need to buy special rubbish bags which are quite costly (they should motivate people not to produce much waste). You can buy this “Zürisack” (“Zurich bag”) in retail stores; however, you usually have to ask the cashier, the bags are not on the shelves.

Regarding the recycling of many materials Switzerland prides itself to be (almost) world champion. Specifically, paper, cardboard, glass, aluminium, PET bottles, batteries and electronic devices are recycled. Paper and cardboard are collected from in front of your house, for glass and aluminium there are official collecting sites in your neighbourhood or municipality. PET bottles, batteries and electronic devices can and should be returned to any retailer which sells them (the retailer does not have to sell that specific brand or type of battery or device nor do you have to have bought the item from that retailer). Retailers are obligated to take these items back free of charge. Depending upon where you live there may also be possibilities to specifically dispose of bio-waste; best ask your neighbours or flatmates.

**Supermarkets**

There are several retailers in Switzerland, for example Migros, Coop, Denner, Spar, Aldi, Lidl. The two biggest retail stores are Migros (the name is pronounced as in French, i.e. without “s” sound) and Coop. It may be important to note that – as a company policy with long tradition – Migros does not sell Alcohol and Tobacco.

**Leisure**

For tips regarding leisure and nightlife you may want to look at RonOrp (www.ronorp.net), ZüriTipp (www.zueritipp.ch) or the newspapers. The cinema program can be obtained from Cineman (www.cineman.ch), the TV program from SF (www.tvprogramm.sf.tv), Teleboy (www.teleboy.ch) or directly within Wilma (www.wilmaa.com), a service which lets you watch many TV stations on your computer.

**Public holidays**

Public holidays in Switzerland differ to some degree from canton to canton (roughly depending upon the dominant religious denomination). The UZH has a website detailing the public and University holidays which affect the curriculum including what that means for work hours (www.uzh.ch/studies/dates_en.html). A complete overview of cantonal and
municipal public holidays can be obtained from the canton of Zurich. (www.arbeitsbedingungen.zh.ch/internet/vd/awa/awa_as/de/allgemeines/feiertage.html).

**Useful phone numbers**

Police: 117  
Toxicologic emergencies: 145  
Fire emergencies: 118  
Rega (air rescue): 1414  
Medical emergencies: 144  
Directory enquiries: for example 1811, 1818

**News**

Swiss news in English (or French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Arabic, Chinese) are provided by Swissinfo (www.swissinfo.ch). The two most important daily newspapers in Zurich with decent online content (however, in German) are NZZ (www.nzz.ch) and Tagesanzeiger (www.tagi.ch). Swiss TV (www.sf.tv) offers many of its broadcasts online, too (also in German or Swiss-German).

**Further resources**

“Living and working in Switzerland” by the Federal Office of Migration  
“New in Zurich” / “Neu in Zürich” (more encompassing) by the city of Zurich  
Government-issued information about many topics (www.ch.ch)  
Tips on moving to Switzerland by Comparis (en.comparis.ch/immigration)  
ETH Handbook for international students (www.rektorat.ethz.ch/students/immigration)  
Search.ch web map (www.map.search.ch)  
Search.ch phone directories (www.tel.search.ch)  
Swisscom phone directories (http://tel.local.ch/en)  
Swiss Meteorological Office (www.meteoschweiz.ch)  
Zurich Tourism (www.zuerich.com/en/welcome.cfm)  
Switzerland Tourism (www.myswitzerland.com/en)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Swiss German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hello</strong></td>
<td>Guten Tag / Hallo</td>
<td>Grüezi / Hoi (first-name basis [fnb])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goodbye</strong></td>
<td>Auf Wiedersehen / Tschüss</td>
<td>Adie(u) / Ciao, Tschüss [fnb]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>Ja</td>
<td>Ja / Jo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>Nein</td>
<td>Nei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please</strong></td>
<td>Danke</td>
<td>Danke, Merci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thank you</strong></td>
<td>Mein Name ist…</td>
<td>Min Name isch…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My name is…</strong></td>
<td>Ich komme aus…</td>
<td>I chume us…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I don’t understand</strong></td>
<td>Ich versteh nöd</td>
<td>Ich verstoh nöd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speak slowly, please</strong></td>
<td>Bitte sprechen Sie langsam / Bitte sprich langsam [fnb]</td>
<td>Bitte reded Sie langsam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How are you?</strong></td>
<td>Wie geht es Ihnen/Dir (fnb)?</td>
<td>Wie goht’s Ihne/Dir (fnb)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I’m fine, thank you</strong></td>
<td>Mir geht es gut, danke.</td>
<td>Mir goht’s guet, danke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not so fine.</strong></td>
<td>Nicht so gut.</td>
<td>Nöd so guet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where is …?</strong></td>
<td>Wo ist …?</td>
<td>Wo isch …?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How do I get to …?</strong></td>
<td>Wie komme ich zum/zur …?</td>
<td>Wie chum I zum/zur …?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open</strong></td>
<td>offen</td>
<td>offe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closed</strong></td>
<td>geschlossen</td>
<td>gschlosse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toilets</strong></td>
<td>Toiletten</td>
<td>WC / Toilette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency</strong></td>
<td>Notfall</td>
<td>Notfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pharmacy</strong></td>
<td>Apotheke</td>
<td>Apotheke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctor</strong></td>
<td>Arzt</td>
<td>Arzt / Dokter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bicycle</strong></td>
<td>Fahrrad</td>
<td>Velo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Car</strong></td>
<td>Auto</td>
<td>Auto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Train</strong></td>
<td>Zug</td>
<td>Zug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your tickets, please!</strong></td>
<td>Fahrkarten, bitte!</td>
<td>Billette bitte!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aircraft</strong></td>
<td>Flugzeug</td>
<td>Flugzüg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>Frühstück</td>
<td>Zmorge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Mittagessen</td>
<td>Mittagessen, Zmittag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dinner</strong></td>
<td>Abendessen</td>
<td>Obedesse, Abigesse, Nachtesse, Znacht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How much does this cost?</strong></td>
<td>Was kostet das?</td>
<td>Was choschted das?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bread</strong></td>
<td>Brot</td>
<td>Brot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chocolate</strong></td>
<td>Schokolade</td>
<td>Schoggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cheese</strong></td>
<td>Käse</td>
<td>Chaääs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water</strong></td>
<td>Wasser</td>
<td>Wasser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wine</strong></td>
<td>Wein</td>
<td>Wii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beer</strong></td>
<td>Bier</td>
<td>Bier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tap/draft beer</strong></td>
<td>ofenes Bier</td>
<td>Stange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>organic</strong></td>
<td>biologisch</td>
<td>biologisch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>vegetarian</strong></td>
<td>vegetarisch</td>
<td>vegetarisch, vegi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100</strong></td>
<td>Eis, zwei, drei, vier, fünf, sechs, sieben, acht, neun, zehn, zwanzig, dreissig, vierzig, fünfzig, sechzig, siebzig, achtzig, neunzig, hundert</td>
<td>Mäntig, Zischtig, Mittwuch, Dunnschüg, Fritig, Samstig, Sunntig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>yesterday</strong></td>
<td>gestern</td>
<td>geschter / gescht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>today</strong></td>
<td>heute</td>
<td>hüt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>tomorrow</strong></td>
<td>morgen</td>
<td>morn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>at five o’clock</strong></td>
<td>um fünf (Uhr)</td>
<td>am füfi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>at six o’clock</strong></td>
<td>um sechs (Uhr)</td>
<td>am sächsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>at seven o’clock</strong></td>
<td>um sieben (Uhr)</td>
<td>am siebni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun</strong></td>
<td>Montag, Dienstag, Mittwoch, Donnerstag, Freitag, Samstag, Sonntag</td>
<td>Mäntig, Zischtig, Mittwuch, Dunnschüg, Fritig, Samstig, Sunntig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>