

BioPhD Guide

Adapted from Shem Johnson

Version 3
September 2016

Hello PhD student. Welcome to the Program! This guide was put together to help you navigate your way around the PhD program and Geneva! It is also available online on the PhD Program website and we hope it is useful to you and you settle in to your new life!

First thing to know, it is required that PhD students [sign up to the BioPhD email list](#) (click abonnement and fill in your unige address in the box) to be updated with any information regarding the life of the PhD program.

You should also [create your Student account on the PhD Program website](#), so that the Heads of the PhD Program can stay informed about the students.

Importantly, this guide is only as good as it is current and accurate. If you have something you would like to add, please do! Take the time to help others know what you know. The link to the **BioPhD Guide** is to a copy to which changes can be added for the **next version** of the document.

Biophd email signup <https://listes.unige.ch/sympa/info/biophd>

Student account creation: <http://lifesciencesphd.unige.ch/users/login>

BioPhD Guide Revisable version <http://goo.gl/baqiYw>

Intro

The **Faculty of Sciences** of the **University of Geneva** offers an outstanding research environment for studies in the Biomedical and Life Sciences. The departments of **Biochemistry**, **Cell Biology**, **Genetics and Evolution**, **Molecular Biology** and **Plant Biology** have united their efforts to provide an extensive educational background and possibilities in research that are necessary to meet the scientific challenges of the future.

Over thirty research groups participate in the program offering a wide variety of research themes. There are currently over 80 PhD students in the host labs and we predict approximately 15 new entries each year.

Geneva is a central point in Western Europe, the home to several important international organizations and businesses, has a wide range of cultural activities for all tastes, and provides an outstanding natural environment for outdoor activities.

University of Geneva <http://www.unige.ch>

Faculty of Sciences http://www.unige.ch/sciences/index_en.html

The program

The normal duration of a PhD thesis is 4 years, but funding can be secured for up to 5 years when necessary. The subsequent years are devoted mainly to **research, seminars, and a yearly student retreat**. Students will be given the opportunity to communicate their passion for science in a variety of **teaching activities** ranging from helping undergraduate students in laboratory courses to hosting the public during "open house" days. A moderate amount of **teaching** is expected as it is considered an important aspect of PhD training. More information can be found at the **Life Sciences PhD Website**.

Life Sciences PhD http://lifesciencesphd.unige.ch/research_groups

Course-work

There is only one **mandatory course** that you must attend which uses lectures from many of the professors to familiarize you with their work and to provide good discussions during class and in group paper reviews. The course goes for two semesters, one in the fall and one in the spring. Don't miss any classes, especially the first two. Coursework will be available on the University computer system **Chamilo**. This course is taught in English.

Chamilo <https://chamilo.unige.ch/>

TAC meetings

The Thesis Advising Committee (TAC) is an integral part in the PhD program and is important to pay attention to the guidelines below. They are not only a good opportunity to present your work in front of a demanding audience, but the feedback you get from your committee could be extremely helpful to your project. Remember, the feedback you get from your committee will be directly proportional to the quality of your report.

Here is the general timeline that you should follow starting from the beginning of your PhD:

3-4 months: Find your committee and schedule the meeting. Your committee should consist of your advisor and, if possible, members relevant to your work.

6-9 months: Your first TAC meeting

Every 12 months after your first TAC: And another, and another, and another...

Prior to TAC meetings, you should prepare a written summary of 1500 to 2500 words, (~3-5 pages, excluding references) outlining the goals of your project, what has been accomplished and what is planned for the future.

During TAC meeting, you should present this material as an open discussion with the committee. Subsequently, TAC members will privately discuss the student's progress in terms of Intellectual potential as demonstrated by his/her participation, integration into the host lab, and the potential to carry out independent research. You might also be asked to provide feedback about your own advisor.

There is a TAC meeting report form that needs to be filled out and sent to the Head of your

Department. You should also add every TAC meeting report to your Student File on the PhD Program website.

Thesis & Defense

Requirements for the completion of the Thesis differs from department to department. Inquire within your department for more details.

Societies, Seminars & Workshops

Societies

An important organization to be a part of is **Life Sciences Switzerland (LS²)**. LS² is a non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing the life sciences within the Swiss academic community. The highlight of the year is their annual meeting which bounces between Lausanne and Zurich. The sizable event is a great opportunity to see outstanding international speakers and to hear about all the exciting science going on in Switzerland. Being a member of this organization not only offers free entry into the annual meeting, but provides access to grants for learning new techniques in Switzerland or abroad, going to conferences, and other enriching activities.

The **NCCR Chemical Biology (National Centres of Competence in Research)** is an internationally recognized centre of excellence in research in a new interdisciplinary field: chemical biology. The mission is to develop new tools and approaches derived from chemistry in order to understand, visualise and control biological processes. The NCCR is also engaged in a platform for chemical screening aimed at developing a new generation of molecules with biological effects. They have a 3-day annual retreat once a year, and organize many seminars throughout the year.

There are various Swiss and European groups and workshops that would interest you. **EMBO** offers the largest number of life science events in Europe. **EMBO Courses & Workshops** funds approximately 80 events attracting more than 8,000 participants every year.

FEBS (Federation of European Biochemical Societies) is one of the largest scientific organizations in the European community and offers many courses and workshops as well.

The **SEB (Society for Experimental Biology)** encourage the cross-fertilisation of ideas and disciplines. It supports new ideas, innovation and bold leaps in thinking, ensures that experimentation is at the heart of Biology, and brings scientists together.

The mission of the **RSB (Royal Society of Biology)** is to be the unifying voice for biology, to facilitate the promotion of new discoveries in biological science for national and international benefit, and to engage the wider public with our work. Individual members include practising scientists, students at all levels, professionals in academia, industry and education, and non-professionals with an interest in biology.

LS² <http://www.usgeb.ch/>

NCCR Chemical Biology <https://nccr-chembio.ch/>

EMBO <http://www.embo.org/funding-awards/courses-workshops>

FEBS <http://www.febs.org/our-activities/advanced-courses/>

SEB <https://www.sebiology.org/>

RSB <https://www.rsb.org.uk/>

Seminars

There are many great lectures through the year to stimulate the mind given by various lectures series, clubs, and invited guests. Check out the **Bioseminars Calendar** for upcoming events! You can integrate this calendar into gmail or other off-line calendars for convenience.

The **Weigle lecture**, an annual lecture named after one of the founders of molecular biology in Geneva, Jean Weigle, is never to be missed. The **LSSS**, or Life Sciences Seminar Series, hosts twenty speakers on average on a broad range of topics. Various clubs such as the biology club also have lectures which can be found at the events Calendar.

Bioseminars Calendar <http://bioseminars.unige.ch>

LSSS <http://lsss.unige.ch/>

Weigle http://www.molbio.unige.ch/eng/weigle_lectures

Workshops & Courses

The Conférence universitaire de Suisse occidentale (**CUSO**), is a programme dedicated to "OMICs" studies and which offers many seminars/workshops to all PhD students of the Universities of Bern, Fribourg, Lausanne, Neuchatel and Geneva. Registering with CUSO will give you access to some general skills workshops in such topics as communications, professional planning, Scientific and Academic English and others. On the more science side of things, there are many activities related to genomics, plants, and many others. There are three types of activity categories: Scientific knowledge, methodological improvement, and acquisition and reinforcement of skills.

CUSO signup <http://competences.cuso.ch/en/activities/>

CUSO courses <http://biologie.cuso.ch/staromics/activities/>

Committees & Student Events

Student Committees

Created in 2010, the association **A PhD in Life Sciences** is made up of the all the doctoral candidates in the International PhD program of Basic and Applied Molecular Life Sciences. The aim of this association is to coordinate the actions of its members, notably in the organization of the annual PhD conference. It also aims to give a voice to the PhD students in order to balance their interests with those of the professors and organizers of the program. There is an **annual General Assembly** that is open to all students where ideas and issues can be discussed. The new committee is also voted for. If you as a student have any questions or concerns about student life, the program, or even your PI, the **Department representatives** are available to talk.

2016 BioPhD Committee

President: Margot Riggi (Loewith/Roux)
Secretary: Jared Fudge (Fitzpatrick)
Secretary: Yogesh Vegunta (Loewith)
Treasurer: Jorge Larios (Gruenberg/Roux)
Treasurer: Ilaria Di Meglio (Roux)
Financial Controller: Manuel Hofmann (Fitzpatrick)
Financial Controller: Karoline Leopold (Schalch)
Media Correspondant: Ayala Sela (Lopez Molina)

Social Activities Coordinators

Yohan El Bali (Karch) & Anatoly Kozlov (Nagoshi)

Department Representatives

Cell Biology: Natalia Serbyn (Stutz)
Biochemistry: Ana Lopez (Soldati)
Genetics & Evolution: Asier Ullate (Milinkovitch)
Molecular Biology: Alessandro Stirpe (Schalch)
Plant Biology: Alexis Riché (Goldschmidt-Clermont)

2017 PhD Retreat Committee

Jared Fudge (Fitzpatrick), Natalia Serbyn (Stutz), Yogesh Vegunta (Loewith), Sofia Zaganelli (Martinou), Jimit Shah (Citi), Manuel Hofmann (Fitzpatrick), Nened Suknovic (Galliot)

PhD retreat

The major retreat of the year is the **PhD retreat**. Although the format changes from year to year, generally all students attend and present either a poster describing their projects or a short talk. Invited external keynote speakers also give talks. Awards for the best poster and the best talk are awarded. There is often time for group activities such as hiking or skiing. The retreat committee is made up entirely of students who through the years have done an excellent job of finding often beautiful locations and covering costs by finding corporate sponsors for donations.

2016 PhD Retreat http://cms.unige.ch/sciences/biologie/bimol/phd_retreat2016

TGIF

TGIF (“**Thank God It’s Friday**”) is a student run event designed to help students get to know each other better. A plethora of cheap beer and snacks helps this effort tremendously. It is held on Friday at 6:00 in Sci II room 3079, and each week two different students are in charge of the organization; you will receive the schedule by email from the Social Activities Coordinators. There are also some special events during the year such as **Halloween TGIF**, **Carnival TGIF** and **liquid nitrogen ice cream socials**.

PhD Ski Trips

The **PhD Ski weekend** varies in time and place but is generally held in late winter or early spring, also organized by a few motivated students.

There are **special ski buses** that head to the slopes on Saturday morning and is sponsored by the University for its students. It is a pretty cheap way to see the slopes. There are also University sponsored **ski camps** held in Zermatt, Crans-Montana and St-Moritz.

Helpful Tips

Unige Email

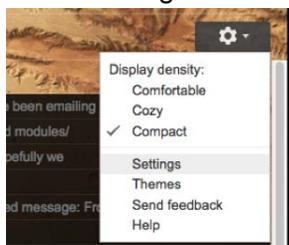
The university email can be accessed by the web portal **PortalUnige** where you can also find many links to things like your courses, useful softwares to download, and card services.

PortalUnige <https://portail.unige.ch/accueil>

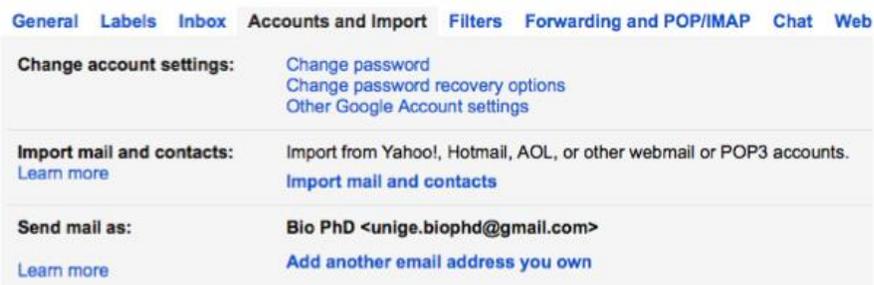
Gmail integration of unige email

You can not only receive your unige email in your Gmail inbox, but you can also SEND from Gmail and make it appear as if you sent it from your unige account. See the instructions below:

1. If you do not have a gmail account, go to www.gmail.com and make an account.
2. Click the gear in the upper right corner, then settings.



3. Click 'Accounts and Import', then 'Add another email address you own'



4. Fill in Name with your name (first name or whatever) and unige email address. If not checked, check 'treat as an alias'. Then click 'Next Step'.



5. -Click button 'Send through unige.ch SMTP servers.

-SMTP Server: outlook.unige.ch

-Port 587

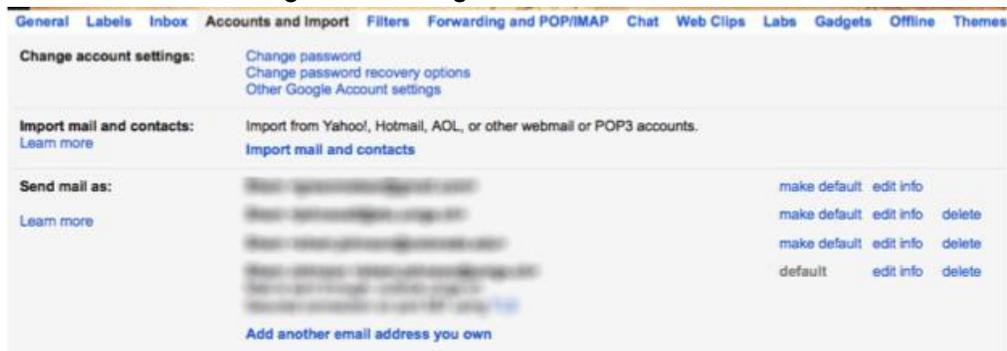
-Fill in your Unige user name and password

-Click button for Secured connection using TLS

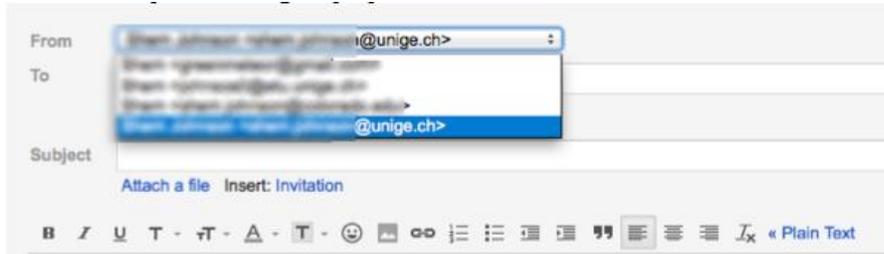
Click save changes and it will check to see if the info is correct.



6. To make your unige account the default account, go back to 'Accounts and Import' and click 'make default' to the right of the unige account.



7. Now when you click 'compose' for a new email, you will see a drop down menu to select the address you want to send from.



8. Lastly, under 'accounts and import' click 'Reply from the same address message was sent to' which means if someone sent email to your private account, gmail will automatically choose that address to send an email back. However, composing a new email will always use the default address.

When replying to a message:

- Reply from the same address the message was sent to
 - Always reply from default address (currently shem.johnson@unige.ch)
- (Note: You can change the address at the time of your reply. [Learn more](#))

Health Services

If you have a medical emergency, the **Hospital of Geneva (HUG)** is not far away. Here are a list of emergency numbers should you need them:

Ambulance **144**

Police **117**

Fire **118**

Toxicological **145**

University internal safety **1222**

The university also offers psychological support through the university via the **Centre de Conseil Psychologique** to all its members, and a free of charge **Coaching Service** (in French or English) for the students who wish to improve personally, professionally or academically.

Hospital of Geneva www.hug-ge.ch/

Centre de Conseil Psychologique http://www.unige.ch/dife/conseil-psychologique/Accueil_en.html

Coaching service http://www.unige.ch/sciences/Coaching_en.html



ACCIDENT-MEDICAL EMERGENCY

1. **Get help, dial 144**

Give the following information:

- Who?** Caller's name, phone number
- What?** Events, circumstances leading to emergency, nature of problem
- Where?** Exact location (full address, useful information about access)
- When?** How long is it since the event?
- How Many?** Number of casualties, nature of injuries
- Other Info?** Symptoms observed, help given, etc.

2. While waiting for help

- **Observe** and assess the situation
- **Think** and ensure your personal safety
- **Act:** evaluate injured person's condition and provide first aid according to your skills. Ask witnesses to remain at scene of emergency.

 **WARNING:** do not try to remove a foreign body from your eye or someone else's eye. Rather, consult an ophthalmologist.

3. **Meet the emergency services and lead them to the scene**

4. **Dial 1222**

EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS

Intoxication

Medical Emergencies, **144**
Dial

For information concerning toxic substances and antidotes, call 145 (Swiss toxicological information center)

Spills/physical contact

In eye

1. Rinse eye thoroughly with running water or with eye wash
2. Dial **144**
3. Dial **1222**

 **WARNING:** do not try to remove a foreign body from your eye or someone else's eye. Rather, consult an ophthalmologist.

On skin or clothing

1. Remove soiled clothing
2. Rinse exposed body part thoroughly
3. Dial **144**
4. Dial **1222**

Emergency actions

FIRE 118

SERIOUS ACCIDENT 144

INTOXICATION 144

SECURITY EMERGENCY 117

CHEMICAL INCIDENT 1222



UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

SANTÉ AU TRAVAIL, ENVIRONNEMENT
PRÉVENTION, SÉCURITÉ

FIRE OR EXPLOSION

1. **Get help, dial 118**

Fire Department - SIS
Or push
Fire alarm button

Give the following information:

- Who?** Caller's name, phone number
- What?** Events, circumstances leading to emergency, nature of problem
- Where?** Exact location (full address, useful information about access)
- Other Info?** Measures taken, relevant info for firefighters

2. Act

- To save people is first priority
- If possible, begin to fight the fire
- Comply with any instruction provided by the person in charge of safety

3. **Meet the emergency services and lead them to the scene**

IMPORTANT:

The local safety instructions found in every building are to be studied BEFORE an incident actually occurs. They should be located, consulted regularly and followed.

EVACUATION



When the evacuation signal sounds



1. Follow instructions



2. Help your neighbors, when necessary



3. Close doors and windows



4. Take closest exit and go to assembly point

SECURITY EMERGENCY

- Assault, robbery, act of vandalism or serious threat in progress

Call the police 117

- Unwelcome or troublesome person, or theft / act of vandalism which have been carried out

Call security on **1222** or **022 379 1222**

CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL OR RADIOACTIVE INCIDENT

In the event of spills, toxic or gas leaks, suspicious odors, etc.

1. Avoid exposure
2. Leave the premises rapidly
3. On your way out close doors and block access (e.g. in a corridor)

4. Call **1222** or **022 379 1222**

5. Meet the emergency services



Any other questions?

For further information about occupational health and safety, you may contact:
faculty of Sciences,
Raphaël MAION, extension 93163
faculty of Medicine,
Jacques LE MOAL, extension 95066
all other faculties,
Anna-Sofia IDEMUDIA, extension 97751

See the following web sites:

www.unige.ch/steps
www.cusstr.ch

Transportation

Trains and Trams

Public transportation in Switzerland is efficient, on time, and extensive. The **TPG** is Geneva's public transportation. Tickets can be bought at the machine and are good for 1hr on boat, train to the airport, bus or tram. Conveniently, any Swiss phone can SMS the number 78 8 with the message saying tpg1 (for full price ticket) or tpg2 (for a demi-tarif ticket) and you will get a text with your ticket and be charged by your phone company on your monthly bill. This feature is also available in the Android and Iphone apps which includes GPS point to point directions on which transport to take and can show you all of the nearby stations and how long it will take for the buses and trams to arrive.

TPG <http://www.tpg.ch/>

TPG app (Android) <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ch.tpg.android>

TPG app (Iphone) <https://itunes.apple.com/fr/app/id421132153>

CFF SBB

Switzerland's train network is extensive and expensive. Always buy a ticket as they usually check most trains. Unless you buy a ticket for a specific train at a specific time, tickets may be used at any time on the day of purchase and there are no assigned seating. Be aware that round trip tickets bought to a destination under 115 km away needs to be used the same day but over 115 km and you have 10 days for the return. Before it expires, you can take any train that goes between those points, though sometimes you have to specify which city to route through if there are two options to take. It costs exactly the same to buy two one-way tickets as it does for the equivalent round trip. You can also get the **CFF SBB** app on your phone, register a credit card (from a computer) and buy tickets directly from the phone.

CFF SBB <http://www.cff.ch/home.html>

Discounted travel

The **Swiss Pass** is a half price card that can be bought annual for 175chf and can be bought at the Cornavin ticket office (You will need a passport photo). This cuts any train **CFF** ticket price in half and also reduces the **TPG** and any other city's transport price. In Geneva's case it drops from 3.50chf to 2.50chf per ticket. **Students Discounts** are also available on Geneva TPG and regional passes. There are also special passes with better discounts for **point to point travel**. Cheap tickets can also be bought with **SuperSaver** tickets, though these deals are often for specific trains at specific times.

One round trip ticket to Zurich will cost around 170chf, so that Swiss Pass will save you 85chf in one go. It usually pays for itself pretty quickly. The **General Abonnement (GA)** card on the other hand, is a yearly pass that gives you unlimited travel on any train, bus, tram, and boat in Switzerland (almost). However, it costs an arm and a kidney. A second class ticket for students between 25 and 30 years old is currently 2530chf. Over 30 years old and it goes up to 3550chf.

Student Discounts <https://memento.unige.ch/doc/0062/>

Point to point travel <http://www.sbb.ch/en/travelcards-and-tickets/railpasses/inter-regional%20travelcards.html>

SuperSaver tickets <https://www.sbb.ch/ticketshop/b2c/adw.do?4004>

Bicycling

Bicycling around Geneva is by far the quickest and cheapest way to get around town. There are numerous bike lanes and the traffic is pretty aware of bicyclists. That said, you should pay attention to the traffic around you. The tram tracks pose one of the greatest threats as it is easy to put a tire in. Don't hesitate when going over them and always take them at an angle.

If you don't have a bike yet, there are free bike loans and also bike rentals from **GenèveRoule** which is sponsored by the city. The university has two bike sales per year called **Actionvelo** but it is usually crawling with people so get there early.

GenèveRoule <http://www.geneveroule.ch/drupal/en>

Actionvelo <http://www.unige.ch/mobilite/Actionvelo.html>

Flights

We are lucky that Zurich got all the expensive airlines and Geneva was left with EasyJet (save for the cramped legs, the baggage policy, and all the extra fees of course). There are tons of cheap flights out of Geneva. The best website to find tickets is **SkyScanner**. For example, put Geneva into 'From' and Everywhere into 'To' and enter the days you are interested in, and you can get a list of the cheapest flights to all destinations. There is a month view under 'Depart' to find the cheapest days as well.

Geneva Airport <http://www.gva.ch> and **App (google search for GVApp)**

SkyScanner <http://www.skyscanner.ch/?langid=en>

SkyScanner map <http://www.skyscanner.ch/cheap-flights-map>

Couchsurfing

Couchsurfing is a community of over 1.5 million couches (and beds) in practically every city and town on the planet, even McMurdo station, Antarctica has a couch. The general idea is that you host a person when you can and in return, you get to crash with the locals on the cheap wherever you go. It is a really nice community to be a part of.

Couchsurfing <https://www.couchsurfing.org/>

Driver's License

You can drive on your foreign driver's license in Switzerland for up to one year. Before that year is up, however, you have to exchange it for a Swiss driver's license at the **Service cantonal des véhicules**. After 1 year, it is considered that you are driving without a license and you don't want that. Also after that year is up, you would need to take the driving courses which can be thousands of francs. Any EU country, the EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway), The United States, Japan, Israel, and Canada do not need to do a driving test and can go get it exchanged

directly for a small fee. Other countries may have other requirements (theory test?). You will also need a colour passport photograph (35 x 45 mm), an eye doctor's certificate from an optician from the **approved opticians list**, a valid (not expired) foreign drivers license, and a foreign ID card.

Service cantonal des véhicules <http://ge.ch/vehicules/contact>

Approved opticians list <http://ge.ch/vehicules/permis-de-conduire-et-permis-eleve/opticiens-agrees>

Owning a Car

It isn't cheap. There are 5 principle costs: insurance, taxes, gas, parking, and repairs. Basic insurance is around 600-800chf per year. Taxes depend on the size of the engine. A 2.4L is about 650chf per year. For a smaller engine, I'd guess 400-500 per year. Gas depends on the efficiency of your car obviously, but expect around 10-15 chf per 100 km. Parking in Geneva is 300chf per year but certain neighborhoods have more cars than parking spots as they give the 'macaron' to anyone who legally lives there and asks for one. Private spots are 200-300chf per month.

In Switzerland, you need to do a 'control' every 2-3 years. They are pretty thorough and will ask you to repair things on the car. This can cost a lot of money. Getting a cheaper older car can be just as expensive as a new car if it needs many repairs. If you are looking for a cheap older car, look for ones that have just passed the control so you have a couple of years before it needs it again.

Car Rentals

While there are a number of the usual car rental companies in Geneva, there is an interesting option with **Mobility**. These red cars can be rented for from a flat rate of CHF 50 for 3 hours, from CHF 10 for each additional hour during the day, or CHF 5 for each additional hour at night for longer trips. There are tons of spots around town with these cars, many of which are in parking garages. The best way is not with the annual plan, but with Click & Drive. Transport vehicles are 70chf for 3hrs and are a good way to move your stuff across town. You apply for Click & Drive via the Mobility customer portal (click on the "reserve now" link). Once in the customer portal, you make your reservation and pay for it using a credit card. You then collect your Mobility Card from a Swiss Federal Railways ticket counter. You're then ready to drive off and can use the card from then on. It's cool, you use the card to enter the car from a spot on the windshield and drive off. There is a special card to buy free gas, and usually something to get out of the parking garage.

Mobility <https://www.mobility.ch/en/private-customers/solutions/solutions/click-drive/>

Practical information

Permits to live in Switzerland

While things might have become more difficult for foreigners due to recent laws passing, students don't normally have much trouble getting and keeping permits. They can, however, take a long

time to process, sometimes stretching many months before anything comes in the mail. This work is handled by the L'Office Cantonal de la Population (**OCP**).

OCP <https://www.geneve.ch/ocp/>

Health insurance

Unfortunately, further to an amendment to the law on health insurance in Switzerland which entered in force on January 1st, 2014, PostDocs, PhDs and researchers are not eligible to the exemption from mandatory Swiss insurance if they earn more than CHF 40 000 per year, which will most probably your case. You will have to apply to a Swiss basic health insurance plan to be compliant to the law. You can find offers at the **comparis.ch** website.

Since you get an accident insurance directly from the University, you only need to get the package for the health insurance and you may need to check with your provider that you are not paying for it twice. Your plan will come with what is called a **franchise**. The franchise is the maximum amount that you will have to pay during that year before the insurance starts to pay the bills. The lower the franchise, the more you will pay per month, but the sooner you stop paying and it usually ranges from 300chf to 2500chf. It is up to you to decide how much you want to pay.

Comparis: www.comparis.ch

Accident insurance

As an employee of the university, you are automatically covered with accident insurance. This not only covers accidents at work, but any accident anywhere in the world! The University does a horrible job of advertising this. In fact, check with your insurance provider to ensure that you are not paying twice. Costs are around 20-30chf per month.

If you are paid by the Departement d'Instruction Publique (DIP), then you are covered by **La Nationale Suisse**. If you are paid from another fund, then *most likely* you are covered by **SWICA**

La Nationale Suisse: <http://www.nationalesuisse.ch/en>

La Nationale Suisse Emergency number: **00800 6004 6004** or **+41 61 275 20 21**

La nationale Suisse online accident declaration: <https://www.nationalesuisse.ch/en/services/claims-service/damage-report/online-notification-of-claim>

SWICA: <http://www.swica.ch/>

Banks

The big banks include UBS and Credit Suisse, but a more budget option is getting a bank account at La Poste via the postal service. La Poste is cheaper but offers fewer protections from fraud.

Payments

There are two main forms of payments in Switzerland. The first and most common is the orange slip and is the general way that you will receive bills. The easiest way to pay is to go to any post office and pay (always in cash!) the teller the specified amount. You will receive a stamp on the

smaller portion showing that you have paid the bill. Keep this for your records.

Die können Ihre unten stehenden Daten kopieren und in Ihr e-Banking-/E-Finance-Zahlungsformular einfügen. Der folgende Abschnitt kann nicht als Einzahlungsschein am Postschalter verwendet werden.

Empfangsschein / Récépissé / Ricevuta	Einzahlung Giro	Verserment Virement	Versamento Girata
<p>4 in favour of UBS AG 8098 Zürich In favor of Orange Communications SA CH-1020 Renens 1</p> <p>bill date 02.03.2014 please pay by 28.03.2014</p> <p>Bank / Banque / Banca 01-00145-6 CHF 1 total to be paid 100 45</p> <p>Erbezahlt von / versé par / versato da 00 00000 00000 00000 00000 xxxxxx Company ABC&DD AND AG Rotsaeweg 55 6006 Luzern</p> <p>Die Annahmestelle L'office de dépôt L'ufficio d'accettazione</p>	<p>3 bank account UBS AG 8098 Zürich In favor of Orange Communications SA CH-1020 Renens 1</p> <p>Konto / Compte / Conto 01-00145-6 CHF 100 45</p> <p>609</p>	<p>keine Mittelungen anbringen pas de communications non aggiungere comunicazioni</p> <p>Reference No. / N° de référence / N° di riferimento 00 00000 00000 00000 00000 xxxxx</p> <p>2 reference number Erbezahlt von / versé par / versato da Company ABC&DD Rotsaeweg 55 6006 Luzern</p>	

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There are also red slips which are more for 'casual' payments between people and do not include a reference number. If you have an online bank account, you can pay these online but make sure that you choose correctly between red and orange. The third way, with online banking, is paying someone via their IBAN account directly.

The Tax Man

Foreign PhD students will be taxes 'à la source', meaning that taxes will be automatically deducted from your salary. This usually functions well, however there are some PhD students who are subject to bureaucratic loopholes. As a PhD student, we are paid 70% of salary. If you are paid from one source at 70% then the taxes should be in order. However, if your salary comes from two different sources, usually a 60% contract and another 10% contract, then often times the 10% contract is not taxed (since it is below the taxable amount of income). This is a mistake by the canton, since they should add the 60% and 10% contracts and tax the total amount. If this is the case for you, get in touch with the canton to straighten this out. Past students who had this problem were asked to pay back the un-taxed income that had accumulated over the years. This can come as an unpleasant surprise right before you leave the country. Some students have been asked to pay over 5000chf, even double that.

Housing

Needless to say, finding housing in Geneva can be difficult. There is a housing shortage, and many people can be fighting for the same apartment. First off, be careful of FRAUD and SPAMMERS. Apartments for cheap (600chf and below) should be approached with caution. Never send money ahead of time, always see the apartment first. Expect to pay between 700chf and 1300chf per month, a little less for a bedroom.

You will generally need to provide a dossier of documents to the Regie of the apartment in order to apply. This includes documents:

- **Attestation de non-poursuite** (this document shows that you do not owe money to anyone, obtained from the Office des Poursuites et des Faillites <http://ge.ch/opf/attestation-de-non->

poursuite) which can be ordered online (14chf) or at Rue du Stand 46 in person (17chf). It can then be copied and used for all dossiers and lasts a few months and then expires

- **Copy of your passport**

- **Copy of your job contract** (Relevée de salaire- ask the secretary for it, they will obtain it from HR)

- **a letter of motivation** stating who you are, what you do in Geneva, how long you're thinking of staying, a little bit about what kind of a person you are (this is a document that not many people have and gives you an advantage over others)

- **a letter of recommendation** from the head of your department

- **Payment slips** for the last 3 months. It can be a real problem when people first arrive either for a flat in Switzerland or France since they do not yet have 3 paychecks to show but need 3 paychecks to apply for housing. This can suck. An apology in advance on behalf of Switzerland for this odd catch-22.

Once the dossier was ready you can start to look around in classifieds (glocals.ch, WRS, anibis, GHI, see links below) and see what is out there and then go to visit the flats one by one (again, BEWARE OF SPAMMERS). You can either leave your dossier behind with the people showing the flat, or else go to the Regie directly and drop off the dossier (try to chat with someone there to get a bit more personal). You can also try to apply for **University housing**, although this is usually more difficult to obtain since PhD students have salaries. There is also a list of apartments approved by the university but owned by private individuals found at the **Unige Bulog login via ISIS**. As for private listings, **Anibis** has the most listings but is generally a French speaking website. Go to Immobilier » Recherche à louer » Genève and give a price range to the search (advanced search) to narrow the choices to something reasonable. **Glocals** is an English speaking expat website that you must sign up for (free of charge) and has listings though they tend to be a bit more expensive (go to classifieds). Ask your friends and the secretaries of your department. You can also get a private service that searches for you at a fee (usually about 1-2 months rent-expensive!)

University housing <http://www.unige.ch/batiment/division/service-batiments/prestations/logger.html>

Unige Bulog login via ISIS <http://www.unige.ch/dife/bulog/offresenligne/etudiants.html>

Anibis <http://www.anibis.ch/fr/default.aspx>

Glocals <http://www.glocals.com>

Attestation de nonpoursuit <http://ge.ch/opf/attestation-de-non-poursuite>

CIA <http://www.cpeg.ch/>

Responsabilité Civile & House Insurance

If you are renting a flat in Geneva, you are highly advised to get **assurance ménage** (household insurance) and are required to have **Responsabilité civile** (third-party liability insurance). **Responsabilité civile** is usually a part of renting a flat, but it covers any damages that you cause to other people or property outside of your apartment. Coverage is up to a few million francs. The average cost is about 100chf per year for an individual and 150chf per year for a family. Though it is generally included in the insurance you get in France, those who are Frontalier are also required to have **Responsabilité civile**. **Assurance ménage** covers your personal belongings against fire, theft, water damages, natural hazards, and other problems with the

property inside your apartment. While violent crime is quite low in Geneva, many people have had issues with property theft. It is recommended that you catalogue your belongings just in case you have problems and purchase **Assurance ménage**. The links below are to companies offering this insurance. Some of the companies have a special offers for students (free for the first year), so it's worth asking around before settling for one.

AXA Winterthur <https://www.axa-winterthur.ch/en>

Allianz24 <http://www.allianz24.ch/portal/site/allianz-24/>

CSS <https://www.css.ch/en/home.html>

Helvetia <https://www.helvetia.com/ch/content/fr/personnes-privees.html>

Mobilar <http://www.mobi.ch/fr/>

Security Deposit

The security deposit must not exceed the equivalent of three monthly rent payments. Security deposits are normal. The landlord must lodge the deposit with a bank in the tenant's name and you will collect interest on that money while it is there.

Colocataire Rights

The rent is generally due at the beginning of the month. Tenants also pay additional charges for services such as heating, hot water, etc. If additional charges are not mentioned in the contract, they are included in the rent.

The initial rent amount of rent can be freely agreed between the landlord and tenant. However, within 30 days after the takeover of the rented property the tenant can appeal against the rent as abusive, if he was forced into agreeing to the rent due to serious personal or familial difficulties, due to the conditions of the local residential property and business premises market, or if the new initial rent is significantly higher for the same rented property than the old rent. This happens very rarely, because the judge is supposed to intervene only in extremis.

For a tenancy which has been arranged for an indefinite period, several formal prerequisites have to be met by the landlord in order for a rent increase to be permitted. Besides these formalities, there are only a few legally admissible reasons for increasing the rent. It is easier to increase the rent in case of a fixed term contract which has come to an end, but still, if the new rent is significantly higher than the old rent, it runs the risk of being seen as abusive. What happens when you break a lease can depend on your agreement and the regime you are with. Often, you need to give a 3 month notice and you may also be responsible for finding a new tenant.

ASLOCA is an association that protects tenants rights and is very helpful if you have problems that arise with renting or sub-renting. There is a charge for membership but it is insignificant if real problems arise with your housing situation.

ASLOCA <http://www.asloca.ch/>

Used goods

There are a number of used goods stores in Geneva. **Emmaus** is a favorite and if you are looking

for used furniture, it is definitely the place to go. You can bargain with the workers for a cheaper price. Home delivery is 40CHF no matter the number of items, and you can take a week between buying the first item and delivery, so come back again to try and find something else. They have new things come in every day. They also have a lot of dishes, cups, silverware. IKEA is crap and supports the culture of throwaway goods. Plus it often puts you in the awkward position of knowing the name of your neighbors LIATORP coffee table, you know.

Plainpalais market has different days for food and antiques/stuff. Food market is on Tuesday and Friday from 6h30 to 13h, and Sunday 8h to 19h. Antiques and used goods market is on Wednesday, Saturday, and the first Sunday of every month. Bargaining is more difficult here. Lots of good food though. **Caritas** in Carouge and the **Salvation Army** are also popular places.

Emmaus <http://emmaus-ge.ch/magasin/>

Brocante Armée du Salut Genève

Caritas <http://www.caritasge.ch/>

Plainpalais market <http://www.ville-geneve.ch/plan-ville/marches/marche-plainpalais/>

Online used goods

Anibis is the craigslist of Suisse Romandie. Mostly french speakers, just about anything can be found here, sometimes cheaply, sometimes not so much. **Glocals** is an english speaking community of mostly expats. They throw the kind of parties that you probably don't want to end up at, but they have a used goods section with a lot of people leaving town with random items for sale on the cheap.

Anibis <http://www.anibis.ch/fr/default.aspx>

Glocals <http://www.glocals.com>

Living in France

If you have trouble finding a flat in Geneva, then another option is to look for something in France. If you have a European passport, there is absolutely no problem. You will get a different permit (F/G = Frontalière/Grengänger). The advantage here is that shopping and housing is cheaper, so you may be able to afford better food and a bigger flat. The disadvantage is that getting to work will take between 30 - 60 min depending where you come from and what transport you use.

If you **apply for a flat** usually you need to provide the following documents:

- A copy of your **passport** (copie d'une pièce d'identité)
- the last **3 paychecks** (3 dernières fiches de paie)
- A copy of your **work contract** (contrat de travail)
- **Tax assessment** (avis d'imposition)
- A **Reference** from your former landlord/lady or A copy of your tax info on your real estate property if you own any (taxe foncière pour les propriétaires ou références du propriétaire du dernier logement occupé)
- You may be required to have a **second person sign** the contract with you who would have to pay if you are unable to (cautionnaire)

- A **French bank account number** (RIB)

Getting a **bank account** is one of the first things to do. Credit Mutuel is a nice bank which allows you to work with both currencies (CHF and Euros) without having any fees to do so. Also in France you need to register for **electricity** yourself, therefore you have to call the EDF (as soon as you know you are moving there!). You can get yourself **registered** in the town hall but this is not obligatory.

Another thing which awaits you is that you have to make a **tax declaration**, although you will not pay any taxes. The best is to get the documents from the **SIP** in Annemasse (3 Rue Marie Curie), you are required to fill out both: First document: cerfa N° 2047 NOT-K, second document: cerfa N° 2047-K. The declaration is always due in May. For your **internet access** there are several providers, often you would get a package with TV, internet and a Europe Flatrate. I can recommend the company **Free**.

If you don't have a **health insurance** from your country of origin, you will have to get a French health insurance. Until June of 2014 you could subscribe to a cheap insurance, which was available exclusively to Frontalières. Now the law has changed and you would need to get a legal standard insurance. You will also need to have a **housing insurance**, **Axa** is a good provider and often you can subscribe to one with your bank. Usually they are really cheap at around 10 Euros per month.

You can get to work by biking if you are sportive or with public transport. As students we can get reduced transport tickets at Uni Dufour. Bikes can be shopped in France in a **Decathlon**

free <http://portail.free.fr/>

electricity <http://www.edfenergy.fr/>

SIP http://lannuaire.service-public.fr/services_locaux/rhone-alpes/haute-savoie/sip-74012-01.html

Axa <http://www.axa.fr/>

Decathlon http://www.decathlon.fr/fr/store?store_id=PS_97

Language help

There are a number of ways to improve your french while you are here. The university offers French support courses called **Cours d'appui** to students. Migro through their **Ecole-Club programs** also offers courses which are generally 800chf per semester. Otherwise, be on the look out for fliers in the canteen or other ads for others looking to **Tandem Linguistics** trade your language with theirs. The university also offers a service to find tandem partners. But one of the best ways to learn is to hang out with french speakers and drop that fear of speaking!

Migro Ecole-Club <http://www.ecole-club.ch/>

Cours d'appui <http://www.unige.ch/lettres/elcf/coursappui.html>

Tandem Linguistics <http://www.unige.ch/tandems/about.html>

Phone

There are various phone carriers in Switzerland ranging in price and service. **Swisscom** has the

best network though **Salt** (formely Orange) has largely caught up in recent years. Swisscom is by far the most expensive to go with. Swisscom caps the speed but offers unlimited data but a plan with even a halfway decent speed is pretty expensive. Salt is a pretty good deal. They don't cap the speeds but do cap the data, and you can get away with paying around 45CHF per month, 10CHF less if you have your own phone already. There are other carriers such as **Sunrise** that may be even cheaper.

swisscom <http://www.swisscom.ch>

orange <http://www.orange.ch>

sunrise <http://www1.sunrise.ch/>

Sports

There are many sports clubs and there are many groups of students who enjoy various sports. The **university** has a list of whole host of sports to play. Just across the river is the **Centre sportif de la Queue-d'Arve** where students can get passes for swimming, climbing, badminton, floor hockey, and many other sports. Disc Golf is pretty much the best sport on the planet and Geneva is home to four courses including the brilliant Parc Les Evaux walkable in five minutes from tram stop Onex. The local Disc golf club Disc Golf Genève usually plays there on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mid-mornings.

Centre sportif de la Queue-d'Arve <http://www.ville-geneve.ch/plan-ville/sports/centre-sportif-queue-arve/>

University Sports <http://www.sports.unige.ch/index.php/sports>

Disc Golf Genève www.discgolf-geneve.ch

Out to Play

Festivals

There are many festivals that come to the surrounding area worth checking out. This list is woefully short but hits some of the big ones. The **Paléo Festival** is a six day festival near Nyon in late July with an interesting mix of music. Tickets sell out within minutes on the big nights so be ready for ticket release. The **Montreux Jazz Festival** has some amazing names come through but you'll be paying for each show and it ain't cheap. **Fête de Genève** happens early August with a mix of amusement park rides and a pretty spectacular hour long fireworks show. **Electron Festival** is all electronic music showapalooza. The **Geneva Film Festival** along with the sometimes gut wrenching **International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights** is worth checking out.

Paleo Festival www.paleo.ch/

Montreux Jazz www.montreuxjazz.com/

Fêtes de Genève www.fetesdegeneve.ch

Electron festival www.electronfestival.ch/

Geneva Film Festival <http://www.tous-ecrans.com/>

International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights <http://www.fifdh.org/>

Cinemas

Cinetransat is just awesome. It is a free outdoor cinema experience on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights from mid July to mid August. They play a wide variety of movies including those 80's classics we just love to love. **Pathé** with their three theatres in Geneva, offers up the most recent releases at a not so decent price. There is a theatre by the main shopping drag (Pathé Rex) and the Balexert shopping center (Pathé Balexert). Pathé Balexert currently has the only mini-IMAX screen in Switzerland with an improved sound and 3D experience.

On a more independent flavor, **Cinéma Cite** is good because it is one screen only and is a nice cozy atmosphere with good films. **Les Scala**, in Eaux-Vives is good also, more for its variety and proximity to Da Paulo, the best pizza place in Geneva. **Grütli cinema** is good also for the themes they follow from one week to the next such as the recent Coen brothers theme. The **Cinépass**, for 30CHF per year gives access to 10CHF tickets to 8 small cinemas around Geneva.

Cinetransat <http://www.cinetransat.ch>

Pathé Genève <http://www.pathe.ch/fr/geneve>

Grütli Cinéma <http://www.cinemas-du-grutli.ch/>

Les Scala <http://www.les-scala.ch/>

Cinépass <http://www.cinepass.ch>

Theatres

Geneva puts out a **cultural calendar** where many shows can be found. At There is a good bit of culture tucked away in Geneva if you know where to look. **Victoria Hall** is a beautiful 19th century concert hall where the snooty come to mingle. Orchestral music dominates here. **Théâtre de Carouge** is a nice little theatre with largely French performances. The **Grand Théâtre** is Geneva's main theatre with a wide variety of concerts, ballets, operas, and other spectacles.

Victoria hall http://www.ville-ge.ch/culture/victoria_hall/en/programme.html

Theatre de Carouge <http://tcag.ch>

Théâtre les Salons <http://www.les-salons.ch>

Cultural calendar <http://www.leprogramme.ch/>

Grand Théâtre <http://www.geneveopera.ch/section>

Outdoor activities

Switzerland obviously has much offer in outdoor entertainment. Hiking, climbing, running, canyoning, skiing, you name it, it's here. The first place you might go to get a good view of the city is the **Salève**. Overlooking Geneva from France, the Salève can be reached by taking bus 8 to stop Veyrier Douane, cross over to France and take the cable car up to the top. Switzerland's hiking trails are clearly marked and is over 60,000 km in length. You can start by checking out a website called **wanderland** for some ideas.

Salève <http://www.geneve-tourisme.ch/en/seeing-doing/most-popular/file/feed/mont-saleve/>

wanderland <http://www.wanderland.ch/en/>

