FAQ

Registration formalities

What is the registration deadline for medical studies?
Students who would like to be admitted to medical studies must register with swissuniversities by 15 February of each year. The registration is exclusively effected online.

Admission criteria

What are the general admission criteria for medical studies?
In general, the same criteria apply for admission to medical studies in Switzerland as for other courses of study at Swiss universities. Other criteria, which you can read about below, may be issued. In particular, foreigners are subject to special admission criteria. Further information in this regard is provided by the universities.

What are the admission criteria for Swiss students with a foreign university entrance qualification?
In general, Swiss students with foreign credentials may be admitted to medical studies in Switzerland, provided they meet the admission criteria of the selected university. The relevant university is responsible for answering questions regarding registration eligibility, particularly recognition of foreign university entrance qualifications.

With respect to admission to the federal examination after obtaining a master's degree, the education department of the Medical Professions Commission (Medizinalberufekommission, or MEBEKO) decides on the equivalence of a foreign university entrance qualification with a university entrance qualification recognised by the Swiss federal authorities. In general, equivalence is certified if the holder of a foreign university entrance qualification can demonstrate...
that he or she is registered at a Swiss university. Possible questions in this context should be addressed to the office of MEBEKO:

Federal Office of Public Health  
MEBEKO, education department  
CH-3003 Bern  
T +41 31 322 94 83  
MEBEKO-Ausbildung(a)bag.admin.ch

What are the admission criteria for foreigners who are resident in Switzerland?
Admission of foreign students to medical and chiropractic programmes is based on the regulations of the respective university.

According to a recommendation of the Schweizerischen Hochschulkonferenz (SHK) of 19 November 2015, some categories of foreign candidates are equivalent to Swiss candidates: [link to website]

What are the admission criteria for foreigners who are resident abroad and would like to enrol in medical studies in Switzerland?
The available enrolment capacity in medicine at Swiss universities has regularly been exceeded in recent years. In order to maintain the quality of education, admission restrictions were introduced for medical studies in 1998. If access to medical studies is once again subject to numerus clausus for the coming academic year, foreigners resident abroad will continue to be subject to strict restrictions in view of this situation.

It is therefore generally not possible to admit foreigners resident abroad to medical courses in Switzerland (even for just part of their studies).

Changing universities and disciplines

Is it possible to switch between universities with a qualifying examination and universities without one?
After the registration deadline of 15 February passes it is no longer possible to switch between universities with a qualifying examination and universities without one, or to switch between universities without admission restrictions. Requests to change universities/disciplines within the pool of universities with a qualifying examination can be submitted to swissuniversities until the registration deadline for the exam (45 days before the date of the exam). Requests that are submitted thereafter will no longer be taken into consideration.

Who is responsible for changing universities or disciplines after the successful enrolment?
The evaluation of requests for a change of university and/or discipline submitted after enrolment are not the responsibility of swissuniversities, but rather of the relevant university.

In general, when changing disciplines, the admission criteria for the discipline to which the student wishes to switch must also be met (e.g. the grade necessary for admission; it may be necessary to take the qualifying examination again). However, meeting the admission criteria is not the only
condition set out in the corresponding ordinances. For example, there must also be places available in the desired discipline. Because of the maximum admission capacity aimed for each discipline it should not be assumed that places will be available in all cases.

Recognition of studies completed in a foreign country

Can studies completed in a foreign country be credited towards the start or continuation of medical studies in Switzerland?

The question of recognizing studies completed in a foreign country must be clarified with the responsible faculty of the university in Switzerland at which the student would like to study. Provided the admission criteria are met, the university will decide whether the student can begin at a higher academic level.

Otherwise, the student must begin the first year of medical studies again, although medical examinations passed in a foreign country may be partially credited towards the initial preliminary examination. In the event of admission to the first year, it is necessary to register with swissuniversities in a timely manner.

Qualifying examination

The following information applies in the event that the Swiss University Conference (Schweizerische Hochschulkonferenz SHK) recommends that certain universities apply admission restrictions (numerus clausus) for certain disciplines in February/March of the respective year. Changes in this respect remain reserved and will be immediately communicated on the website of swissuniversities.

For which universities and which disciplines is there a qualifying examination?

The admission capacities for the new academic year are determined by the universities concerned each autumn. If the number of registrations for medical studies once again leads to limited capacity as in previous years that cannot be rectified through transfers before the start of the academic year, admission restrictions may be applied at certain universities on the basis of a qualifying examination. If registration figures remain at the current level (or increase further), the qualifying examination will be held for human medicine, chiropractic care, veterinary medicine and dental medicine and will take place at the universities of Basel, Bern, Fribourg and Zurich (including the tracks Zurich-Lucerne and Zurich-St. Gallen), at the Università della Svizzera italiana and at the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich).

At the universities of Geneva, Lausanne and Neuchâtel however, measures have been taken to conduct an internal selection process (more stringent examinations after the first year).

Registration for medical studies with swissuniversities is necessary, irrespective of whether a qualifying examination is conducted.
What special considerations are there for chiropractic care?
These places are awarded together with the places for human medicine, i.e. the same admission limits apply.

When and where is the examination conducted and in what language can the examination be taken?
The exam is conducted every year at the beginning of July in German (until now in Basel, Bern, Chur, Lucerne, St. Gallen, Suhr and Zurich), in French in Fribourg and in Italian in Lugano. Candidates must find an examination location that conducts the exam in their desired language.

Can the exam only be taken on one appointed date each year?
The exam is only held once a year and is conducted at all exam locations at the same time. It is not possible to take the exam on other dates in the same year.

What is the earliest date the exam can be taken?
In general, the qualifying examination for medical studies can only be taken if the admission criteria are likely to be met by the start of the academic year in the corresponding exam year (subject to the attainment of a university entrance qualification). Students must register with swissuniversities by 15 February.

How do students register for the qualifying examination?
All candidates for human, dental and veterinarian medicine and chiropractic care who wish to begin their studies in the autumn must, if numerus clausus is instituted on the basis of the respective cantonal ordinances, register with swissuniversities by paying a share of the costs of CHF 200 at least 45 days before the test. If you wish to have the test result achieved in the previous year carried over and do not want to repeat the test, you must have your previous year’s result credited up to the same deadline.

Only transfers made in due time or additions to the previous year’s result can be considered as valid registrations. All registered participants will receive an invitation from swissuniversites to the qualifying examination with detailed information (location, directions, provision for meals, etc.) before the test date.

How and when are students informed of the exam results?
The exam results and a written order regarding the awarding of a university place are sent out at the beginning of August by the university for which students have registered.

What are the next steps after students have been informed of the exam results?
All applicants who have been awarded a university place will be informed about the registration procedure by the university.

Can one study with certainty at the preferred university?
Satisfactory exam results do not guarantee a place at the preferred university. Admissions are carried out on a national basis and depend on the capacity and registration figures for the respective universities. Applicants should therefore expect transfers, which are conducted according to set criteria and, to the extent possible, taking account of applicants’ preferences. However, transfers between universities with and universities without a qualifying examination are excluded.
What happens if applicants do not want to study human, dental or veterinary medicine or chiropractic care in that particular year?
In this case, the qualifying examination can only be taken again the following year, provided the student registers with swissuniversities again for human, dental or veterinary medicine or chiropractic care studies by 15 February of the next year. In this case it may be possible to carry over the exam results from the previous year. Otherwise, students can start a non-medical course in the autumn of the same year; however, to do so, students must register with the corresponding university within the prescribed period.

Is it possible to take the exam and – irrespective of the results – start another course of study in autumn of the same year?
Candidates for medical studies who are not awarded a university place based on the results of their examination can still start non-medical studies in the autumn semester.
With the exception of certain courses of study, admission to a non-medical course of study at all other universities generally only requires registration for non-medical studies at the respective university immediately after receipt of the exam information, if applicable. Further information about any exceptions can be found on the websites of the respective universities.

Are exam results from this year also valid for the following year, or do students have to retake the exam if they want to/can only start medical studies the following year?
The question of repeating the qualifying examination is governed by the corresponding cantonal ordinances. According to these ordinances, students can forgo repeating the exam if they register for medical studies with swissuniversities again within one year of taking the test and before the deadline (by 15 February). If students apply again and repeat the exam, the most recent exam results are always used for the application.

With respect to ensuring the equivalence of the exam results from different exam years, please note the following: The results of the qualifying exam for medical studies (EMS) used for admission are directly transferable to the following year through a special standardisation process (only the point values are not comparable for different years).

The standardisation process is explained in more detail in the exam information that will be available online at swissuniversities for applicants who register on time at swissuniversities. Please note that when assessing the likelihood of admission using the exam results for the previous year (1) the thresholds may rise further as a result of an increase in demand, and (2) the percentile rankings for the EMS are for all participants in a particular year and therefore do not refer specifically to the percentiles within each individual discipline.

Is the exam the same every year?
No, in order to prevent unfair advantages a new exam is used every year for all three languages. Because all exams in Germany and Switzerland are rigorously tested under stringent conditions, for economic reasons only one exam of comparable difficulty can be prepared each year.

How can students learn more about the exam?
All candidates are personally informed of the structure of the exam and the arrangements for conducting the exam in a detailed «exam info» and sample task sent by swissuniversities in April.
Three versions of the publication «Test für medizinische Studiengänge» (TMS, «Medical Studies Exam») with original versions of the qualifying examination used in previous years can be purchased at all book stores to prepare for the exam. The versions are available in German, French and Italian.


Versions I, II and II in German: www.unifr.ch/ztd/ems/vord.htm
in French: www.unifr.ch/ztd/ems/vorf.htm
in Italian: www.unifr.ch/ztd/ems/vori.htm

For specific questions regarding the qualifying examination, please contact the Centre for Test Development and Diagnostics (ZTD) at the University of Fribourg (ztd(at)unifr.ch). It is responsible for the exam as well as administering and evaluating it properly.

Further information about the scientific evaluation of the exam (including a FAQ about the EMS and numerus clausus, which contains more background information) can be found on the following website: www.unifr.ch/ztd/ems.

**What is the best way to prepare for the qualifying examination?**
The Centre for Test Development offers information for preparing adequately as well as for having realistic expectations about the ability to prepare for the exam on its website: www.unifr.ch/ztd/ems. As the EMS is not a test of knowledge and it is only possible to study for the exam to a very limited extent, students should be particularly well informed about it.