Preparing for your stay and getting settled

Practical guide
for international PhD students
Congratulations, you are going to prepare your PhD in one of the research labs of the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes! Getting a PhD degree is a scientific and human experience that requires a lot of effort, creativity and dedication. For international PhD students, this adventure comes with major changes: you not only have to complete your research work, but also discover and learn about a new country!

To avoid being overwhelmed upon arrival, you need to keep in mind the steps you must take and the roles of the different people with whom you will interact.

This guide, written specifically for international PhD students, will give you an overview of all the steps awaiting you, from getting accepted into your research unit through to completing your administrative enrollment at the Doctoral college, which will officially confirm the beginning of your PhD.

More detailed information about the day-to-day practical matters covered in this guide can be found in the “Doctoral student” section of the web portal dedicated to internationals: international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/doctoral-student/.

For information concerning the progression of your doctoral training program, you can also refer to the dedicated portal of the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes: doctorat.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en.
The Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes is a major global research hub in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. It is internationally renowned in many scientific areas, as attested by its international ranking for the number of “highly cited scientists” and “European Research Council” awards.

The site benefits from major European instruments such as the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF), hosts prestigious research organizations such as the CEA, CNRS, Inria and the Institut Laue Langevin (ILL), and is close to the CERN. The Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes is at the heart of the development of the city of Grenoble and its dynamic ecosystem, which is based on a solid cooperation between universities, “grandes écoles”, research organizations and the socio-economic world. Grenoble is ranked the world’s 5th most innovative city (Forbes 2013).

With its stunning mountain views, the campus offers the highest quality of life and work. The Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes boasts 9,000 international students and is host to more than 8,000 visiting researchers from all over the world every year. It truly is an international community.
In France, the PhD is a research training program leading to the highest university degree. Preparing a PhD normally takes three years, and requires holding a national Master's degree or other degree equivalent to the Master's level. The research work undertaken is assessed through the writing of a thesis followed by its “defense” (“soutenance” in French) by the student in front of a jury (the equivalent of a PhD examining board or panel of examiners), which will be made up of academic staff and other specialists in the discipline, leading to the award of the degree of Doctor. Alongside your research work, you will also have to take training courses, both in your own scientific subject area as well as in other cross-disciplinary subjects, like career integration.

The doctorate stakeholders
Laboratory, Doctoral college, research organization, Doctoral school, university... All these institutions have different missions and action scopes, and you will probably be in contact with all of them at some point of your stay.
To help you find your way, this section will present each institution's activities in relation to PhD students.

The status of PhD students
A PhD is both a research training program and a professional research experience. Since there are several types of funding (scholarship, contract, personal funds, etc.) and Doctoral options (full thesis, joint thesis, CIFRE, etc.), the status of PhD students is halfway between that of a student and of a regular employee. Knowing your status is important, both so that you can identify who to contact for specific needs and inquiries, and because some administrative procedures vary depending on your status (getting a visa or Social security, for example).

In short, there are two major different status for PhD students:

- **PhD student with a French employment contract**: PhD students with a doctoral or CIFRE contract.
- **PhD student without a French employment contract**: PhD students with a scholarship or without funding.

The doctorate stakeholders
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Research structure

**Universities and research organizations**:
- host different laboratories
- coordinate research policies
- are researchers’ direct employers (so the primary contact for all questions related to human resources)
- provide the “convention d’accueil” (hosting agreement)

**Laboratories / research units**:
- are workplaces for researchers and doctoral students of a specific research field. They are administratively attached to one or several universities, and/or one or several research organizations.
The Doctoral college, which pools and harmonizes the Doctoral schools’ practices:
- deals with administrative registration (student card)
- issues and awards PhD diplomas
- coordinates trainings that are unrelated to the subject area of the dissertation (including professional integration training)
- develops business connections.

The Doctoral school, which brings together research units and laboratories by research fields (Law, Chemistry, etc.):
- deals with pedagogical registration
- is responsible for the follow-up of the dissertation
- manages the learning offer

The laboratory, or research unit, brings together researchers and PhD students around one or several research areas.
Prepare your stay...

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YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY YOUR RESEARCH UNIT

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... in the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes
Step 1:
YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY YOUR RESEARCH UNIT

For this first step, we will assume that you already:

➜ have a clear notion of your PhD subject
➜ have obtained the approval of your PhD supervisor and the director of your host laboratory
➜ have funding
➜ have a degree equivalent to the Master’s level

If you do not yet meet these criteria, please check the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes portal dedicated to Doctoral students or the Campus France website to find more information on the subject.

Find out more
Section Preparing a doctorate
> https://www.campusfrance.org/en/researcher
Section Doctorate
YOUR ENROLLMENT WITH THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Now that you have defined the scientific aspects of your Doctorate with your Doctoral supervisor and your laboratory, you will need the Doctoral school to validate your application. The Doctoral school director makes sure that the scientific, material and financial criteria are met, so that you can prepare your Doctorate in the best possible conditions.

The application file and procedures vary with each Doctoral school. We thus invite you to visit their web portal to find out more.

Section Doctoral studies > The Doctoral schools

PLANNING YOUR BUDGET

Before leaving, it is essential to estimate your budget in order to anticipate for the main expenses to come during your stay in France, as well as the expenses related to your arrival and settling in. Note that besides recurring expenses, you will have to spend a lot upon arrival!

Good to know
In some specific cases, the type of visa you hold may not allow you to work in France. If you have any questions, please contact the International Students and Scholars Office - ISSO (see the section “Need Help? Your contacts” in this guide).

Monthly expenses

Accommodation is the main expense for a Doctoral student and can be as much as 50% of the monthly budget. Expect to spend between €210 and €600 per month depending on the type of accommodation, plus charges (water, electricity, and gas, €30 to €60). Food ranks second: you will spend about €300 per month.

Then come leisure activities, transportation, phone and internet subscriptions, not to mention health care costs, which, even if they are well reimbursed in France, still represent a cost.

Expenses upon arrival

Beware, there are lots of expenses upon arrival, and it is possible that you will spend more than €1000: university registration fees, the first month rent, a deposit for accommodation (equal to one month rent), subscriptions for water, electricity, telephone and the internet, etc.

Financing your stay

Work

To finance your studies, if you do not already have an employment contract for your Doctoral research, you can work part-time for up to 964 hours a year, i.e. 60% of the legal annual number of working hours in France.

Housing allowance

Doctoral students who rent accommodation can apply for a financial aid from the French State for their rent, known as “APL” ("Aide Personnalisée au Logement"), or “ALS” ("Allocation de Logement Sociale"). This aid is subject to conditions, and its amount depends on the rent, the type of accommodation, its surface area as well as your financial resources. Thus, it is difficult to include it in the calculation of your budget before your arrival.

Find out more
A detailed list of the main monthly expenses and the expenses upon arrival:
> https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Practical matters > Managing your budget

http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
Finding accommodation in the region can be challenging, especially in Grenoble, but there are many options. We recommend you start looking for accommodation at least two months prior to your arrival in France.

There are two main accommodation options: the university residences (public or private) and the private rental sector.

Public university residences (CROUS)

This is by far the most economical option, but keep in mind that it does have some drawbacks:

- There is a limited number of rooms available: prepare your application well in advance and send it in as early as possible, especially if you are arriving around the start of the academic year.
- This type of accommodation is not appropriate if you are a couple or if you are coming with your children.
- Accommodation is allocated based on application files, and in particular on financial resources. Sending in an application does not guarantee that you’ll get a room!

How to apply for CROUS student accommodation?

Whether you will be in Grenoble for a long or short stay, you have to apply by filling out the “Hébergement doctorant” (Doctoral student accommodation) form with the CROUS.

www.crous-grenoble.fr/demandeurunlogement/logement-etudiant-international/

If you receive a scholarship from the French government managed by Campus France

- Contact the Campus France agency directly, and they will examine your application in connection with the CROUS accommodation department.

Find out more > https://www.crous-grenoble.fr/demandeurunlogement/

Private rental sector

The private rental sector offers far more possibilities. However, it may be challenging for PhD student to find accommodation at a distance. It is generally preferable in this case to book temporary accommodation for a few weeks and then look for permanent accommodation on arrival (see the “Booking temporary accommodation” section in this guide).

Searching for accommodation

- Via the national web portal for student housing LoKaviZ: this website references rental offers in the private sector for apartments, shared accommodation, and rooms in private houses. www.lokaviz.fr
- Via real estate agencies: these offer a wide choice of accommodation and serve as an intermediary between landlords and tenants throughout the rental period. However, you will need to pay for their service (agency fees). In Grenoble, these agency fees can reach a maximum of €10/m², to which €3/m² will be added as inventory fees.
- Via private owners: some landlords prefer to handle the rental of their property themselves and publish their offer on websites. In this case, there are no agency fees, but please note that this solution does not offer the same guarantees or structure as a real estate agency.
- Via websites specialized in accommodation sharing
- Via private student residences
- Via Grenoble’s “Association Départementale Information Initiative Jeunesse” (ADIIJ), which publishes private listings. www.info-jeunes.fr
**Finding a guarantor**

A guarantor is a person who agrees to pay your rent for you if you cannot pay it yourself. Almost all landlords require the tenant to have a guarantor. An application with a guarantor having his/her residence for tax purposes in France is more likely to be accepted.

If international Doctoral students have trouble finding a guarantor in France, there are other solutions, namely the “Visale” procedure.

[www.visale.fr](http://www.visale.fr)
[www.campusfrance.org/en](http://www.campusfrance.org/en)
Section Students > Getting organised > Accommodation

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**PERSONALIZED ASSISTANCE IN GRENOBLE, WITH THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS OFFICE - ISSO**

If you register with our ISSO Euraxess “guest researchers’ database”, you will receive:

- Personalized advice to help you look for accommodation
- Access to negotiated prices for stays in hotel residences
- Furnished accommodation offers from private landlords, under negotiated terms and conditions

To register:
Section ‘Good to know – Euraxess’

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**Good to know**

Temporary accommodations booked online with private owners do not allow to get a proof of address in France, document which is required to open a bank account in France.

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**OBTAINING A VISA**

Except for nationals from the European Economic Area, Monaco, Andorra and Switzerland, it is necessary to get a visa to enter and study in metropolitan France. Check beforehand the entry, residence and work requirements at the French embassy or consulate in your country of residence.

To find out whether you need a visa:
> [https://france-visas.gouv.fr](https://france-visas.gouv.fr)

**What type of visa to apply for?**

**If you have a French employment contract**, you will follow the visa application procedure “Passeport talent” bearing the statement “chercheur” (scientist/researcher).

**If you do not have a French employment contract**, you will follow the visa application procedure Long Stay Visa (“Visa Long Séjour”, “VLS-TS”) bearing the statement “étudiant” (student).

**Preparing your application file**

According to the type of visa you apply for, various documents will be required, including a proof of address in France (which might be temporary accommodation).

**Doctoral students who have a French employment contract**, will have to provide a document entitled “Convention d’accueil” (hosting agreement). The Human Resources department of your host university or organization will provide you with this document.

**For Doctoral students applying for a student visa**, the consulate will examine, as well as your admission to university, many aspects of your application, including proof of sufficient resources. The requirement is at least €615 per month for the duration of your visa.

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**FAMILY**

If you are married and you are coming with your spouse and/or children, they will have to apply for a visa. To make the process easier, we recommend they apply for their visa while you are applying for yours.

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[http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr)
In France, the healthcare system generally takes care of most healthcare costs. Subscription to health insurance is mandatory for stays of more than 3 months, unless there is a bilateral agreement between France and your country of origin. This is the case for all member states of the European Union, European Economic Area, as well as Switzerland and Quebec: steps are thus to be taken before your arrival in France.

**Your health insurance organization ("Sécurité sociale")**

Different organizations can take care of insured people according to their status. PhD students can be insured by either CPAM or MGEN, and benefit from the same reimbursement rate.

**You have a French employment contract:**

You will be covered from the 1st hour worked by the health insurance general scheme ("Sécurité sociale"). Your financial contribution for health insurance will be automatically deducted at source. However, registration is not automatic: you will have to register with either CPAM or MGEN. See the section “Registering with health insurance” in this guide to know more about the procedure. We recommend you take out a private health insurance in order to be covered at the beginning of your stay, from arrival in France to the start of your employment contract.

**You do not have a French employment contract**

**You are from Europe (EU/EEA) or Switzerland:** prior to your arrival, you have to get a European Health Insurance Card from the health insurance provider of your country of origin. It must be valid for the whole duration of your stay in France.

**You are from Quebec:** you have to get a certificate issued by the "Régie d’Assurance Maladie du Québec" (RAMQ) before you come to France.

www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/
Section Citoyens > Séjours hors Québec > Ententes avec d’autres pays

**For other nationalities:**

You will have to register with the French health insurance, “Sécurité sociale”, via the health insurance website dedicated to new international students (see the section “Registering for health insurance” in this guide). This registration is free of charge, but is only possible after you completed your administrative enrollment at university. Because this procedure can take up to several weeks, we recommend you take out a private health insurance in order to be covered during the first weeks of your stay.

**Find out more**

> https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Health
Section Offices > Guides and info sheets

**Healthcare cost coverage**

Health insurance, commonly known as “Sécurité sociale”, covers only a part of healthcare costs, and the reimbursement rate varies according to the type and importance of treatment needed. To cover the remaining healthcare costs that are uncovered by social security, we highly recommend you take out an additional health insurance, known as “complémentaire santé” or “mutuelle”.

**Healthcare cost coverage example for a visit to a general practitioner at the standard health insurance rate:**

1. **25€** reimbursed by the health insurance
2. **16.50€** reimbursed by the health insurance

**7.50€** reimbursed by your complementary health insurance

**0€** reimbursed if you have no complementary health insurance

**Uncovered cost:**
- **1€** with complementary health insurance
- **8.50€** without complementary health insurance
YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED
BY YOUR RESEARCH UNIT

FAMILY

- Children (under 18): If you come to France with your children, they will also need to subscribe to a health insurance. It is possible to add your children to your own health insurance plan. In this case, this will be done at the same time as your own subscription.

- Spouse: If you come with your spouse, he/she will also have to subscribe to a health insurance. It is not always possible for spouses to register with a health insurance organization straight upon arrival in France. We therefore recommend subscribing to a private health insurance for the first months of their stay.

Section Good to know-Euraxess

Good to know

If you need to subscribe to a private health insurance for your first months of residence, before you register with Social Security or for your family, please note that you can benefit from negotiated offers from a partner insurance company as part of the EURAXESS network (by registering with the 'guest researchers' database', through ISSO’s web portal).

Section Good to know-Euraxess

Repatriation insurance

We also advise you to take out repatriation insurance for the duration of your stay, before your arrival in France, in order to cover for repatriation expenses in the event of serious illness or death. Some bankcards include a repatriation insurance, check with your bank before leaving.

Good to know

There are two other mandatory insurances to be taken out upon arrival in France: the housing insurance, and the civil liability insurance. For more information, see the section "You have just arrived" in this guide.
Step 2:
YOU WILL ARRIVE SOON
### HOW TO GET HERE

**From Paris**

There are two airports for Paris:
- **Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport (CDG, ex-Roissy),** located in the northeast of Paris,
- **Paris-Orly airport,** located in the south of Paris.

**Getting to the train station "Paris - Gare de Lyon"**

Whether you arrive in Paris-Charles de Gaulle or in Paris-Orly, you will need to go to the "Paris-Gare de Lyon" train station to then get to Grenoble, Chambéry, Annecy or Valence by TGV (high-speed train). There are three options: by bus, by RER (Paris's suburban railway), or by taxi.

**By Bus**

From Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport (CDG)

From Paris-Orly airport

**By RER (Paris's suburban railway):**
- From Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport (CDG), RER line B to Châtelet-Les Halles, then line A.
- From Paris-Orly airport, Orlyval, then RER line B to Châtelet-Les Halles, and then line A.

**By taxi:**

From the airport, a certain number of taxi companies can take you to the "Paris-Gare de Lyon" train station.
Price: about €50 during daytime (about 15% more during night time)

### From "Paris-Gare de Lyon" to the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes

From the "Paris-Gare de Lyon" train station, high-speed trains ("TCVs") serve Grenoble and Chambéry in 3 hours, Annecy in 4 hours, and Valence in 2 hours 30 minutes. You should try and book your ticket in advance to benefit from better pricing.

**From Lyon**

From Lyon airport to the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes:

**By bus:**

Ouibus buses go directly to Grenoble, Chambéry, Aix-les-Bains, Annecy and Valence.
- [www.ouibus.com](http://www.ouibus.com)

**By train:**

You can go to Grenoble, Chambéry, Aix-les-Bains, Annecy or Valence from one of those 3 train stations:
- Lyon-St Exupéry train station (airport)
- Lyon-Part-Dieu train station (Lyon town center)
- Lyon-Perrache train station (Lyon town center)

**From Geneva**

From the Geneva airport, there are direct buses to Grenoble, Chambéry, and Annecy, and direct trains to Valence.
- [www.gva.ch/en](http://www.gva.ch/en)
- Geneva-Grenoble and Geneva-Chambéry
- [www.ouibus.com](http://www.ouibus.com)
- Geneva-Annecy

**Good to know**

You can check information related to public transportation in Paris on the RATP website: [www.ratp.fr/en](http://www.ratp.fr/en)
The RATP also provides a smartphone application to help you plan your trip:

[http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr)
Good to know
Some European destinations are also served by two local airports: Grenoble Alpes Isère and Chambéry Savoie Mont Blanc. Please note that these flights are seasonal, and do not operate all year round.

For more information:
www.grenoble-airport.com/en
www.chambery-airport.com/en

Moving around town
Every city has its own public transportation network. Upon arrival, you can easily get tickets for 1 ride, 10 rides, day or 3 to 7 day passes. Monthly and yearly passes are the most cost-effective, but you can only get them after opening a bank account in France.

Grenoble
The network of public transportation in Grenoble is called the TAG. Greater Grenoble is well served by 44 separate bus routes and by 5 tram lines.
+ www.tag.fr

Chambery
The public transportation network in Chambery is called Synchro Bus. This network serves Greater Chambery but also the cities of Le Bourget-du-Lac and Méry.
+ www.synchro-bus.fr

Valence
The public transportation network in Greater Valence is called Citéa.
+ www.citea.info
If you have not found permanent accommodation yet, you can still book a room at a youth hostel, a private individual’s place, a hotel, an aparthotel or at the Galilée CROUS hotel residence.

**FUAJ (Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse) - Youth hostels**
Rooms to share for 2, 4, 6 or 8 persons.
You must be a member of the HI (Hostelling International) association: [www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com).
Price for a room to share: from €18/night/person.

**In Grenoble**
10 avenue du Grésivaudan - 38130 Échirolles
+33 (0)4 76 09 33 52
grenoble@hifrance.org
[www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/grenoble-agglomeration.html](http://www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/grenoble-agglomeration.html)

**In Aix-les-Bains** (the closest youth hostel to Chambery)
Promenade du Sierroz - 73100 Aix-les-Bains
+33 (0)4 79 88 32 88
aix-les-bains@hifrance.org
[www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/aix-les-bains.html](http://www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/aix-les-bains.html)

**Tourist offices**
The tourist offices also have lists of temporary accommodation: hotels, aparthotels, guesthouses, B&B, etc.

- **Grenoble tourist office**

- **Chambery tourist office**
  [www.chambery-tourisme.com](http://www.chambery-tourisme.com)

- **Valence tourist office**

**In Grenoble: the Galilée CROUS hotel residence**
Located in the heart of Grenoble and served by two tramlines, the Galilée CROUS hotel residence offers rooms with hotel services.
Section Logements > The Galilée Hotel-Residential Complex

**Good to know**
In order to open a French bank account, you will need to provide a proof of address in France. Temporary accommodations do not always make it possible to get such a document.
YOU WILL ARRIVE SOON

PREPARING YOUR ARRIVAL: CHECKLIST AND TIPS

Do not forget:

➜ Your identity card (European nationals) or passport.
➜ Original of your birth certificate with filiation, along with its French translation (see “Good to know” note below). Your health record and vaccination certificates (if available).
➜ The original of your Master’s degree (or equivalent).
➜ Your driver’s license if you want to use a car in France.
➜ Socket adapter.

Doctoral students who have a “Passeport talent” visa, bearing the statement “chercheur”:

➜ The original of the “Convention d’accueil” (hosting agreement) issued by the Human Resources department of your host university or organization.

Doctoral students who have a Long-Stay Visa (“VLS-TS”) bearing the statement “étudiant”:

➜ The acceptance letter signed by the director of your laboratory.
➜ Proof of your financial resources (scholarship, salary, etc.).

European (EU/EEA), Swiss and Quebec nationals:

➜ The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC, or ‘CEAM’ in French) or a certificate issued by the “Régie de l’Assurance Maladie du Québec” (RAMQ).

Good to know

Every document written in a language other than French (birth certificate, driver’s license, etc.) must be translated by a translator sworn by the French courts. If you want to translate these documents before leaving, we recommend asking the French embassy or consulate in your country, in order to have the translated documents legalized or apostilled.

FAMILY

In addition to the documents mentioned, do not forget to bring:

- Your marriage certificate
- The family record book or birth certificates of each family member
- The health record and vaccination certificates of each child (mandatory vaccinations for childcare and schooling: diphtheria, tetanus, and poliomyelitis)
- School reports of children
- Proof of family resources for the last tax year

For European (EU/EEA), and Swiss nationals:

- European Health Insurance Card (EHIC, or CEAM in French) of each family member
- SI form or the refusal certificate of the SI form from the health insurance of your country of origin, for each family member

TIPS

Scan all your important documents and send them to your mailbox. Also take two or three photocopies of these documents with you, you will quickly need them upon arrival.

If you travel by plane, keep all the documents from the checklist with you: they can be claimed upon arrival by the border control services.

Write down the essential information in case you do not have internet access upon arrival: accommodation’s address, reception telephone number (for student residences), directions between the station and your accommodation with bus and tram numbers, contact at your laboratory, etc.

If your country uses a currency other than the euro, consider changing money at the airport to be able to make your first payments. Before leaving, check the terms of overseas money withdrawal with your card, because opening an account in France can take from one to two weeks (see the “Opening a bank account” section in this guide).

If you do not have a European Health Insurance Card, or a RAMQ form, remember to get a private health insurance contract in order to be covered during the first weeks of your stay in France.

➡ http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
Step 3: YOU HAVE JUST ARRIVED
**GETTING INTERNET ACCESS**

Lots of wifi spots are available for you to use upon your arrival:

- In airports, cafes, but also in different places in the town centre.
- In university restaurants and students residences.
- On university campuses: you will get your logins and passwords to access the wifi campus network at the time of your enrollment at university.

On the Grenoble campus, computers are available with free access to the internet at the iCampus – Welcome center.

You can also get internet access via your phone. However, roaming charges may apply if you do not use a French sim card! In France, all mobile tariffs include an internet access; you can find offers with (almost) unlimited internet access for around €20 a month.

Find out more

https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Practical matters > Keeping in touch

WiFi in Grenoble:

Free access computers at Grenoble iCampus – Welcome center:
https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Contact
FINDING ACCOMMODATION

Finding accommodation once you have arrived

Finding accommodation requires engagement and time: regularly check offers on the Internet and with real estate agencies, and do not hesitate to seek advice from your host laboratory.

When visiting accommodations, remember to bring several copies of all the necessary paperwork: this will allow you to be first in line if you find the place of your dreams! Check the “Searching for accommodation” section in this guide for more detailed information on searching for accommodation in the private rental sector.

Find out more
Glossary of accommodation terms:
https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Accommodation > Glossary of accommodation terms
Documents that may be required for signing a rental agreement:
www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F1169

When entering your accommodation

Signing the rental agreement (“bail”)

Before you can move in, the landlord and yourself must sign a rental agreement, called “bail” (lease) in French. This agreement is drawn up in two copies and defines the rental conditions, stating the amount of the rent, the surface area of the accommodation, the duration of the agreement, etc. When signing the agreement, you will have to pay various entry fees, such as:

→ the security deposit
→ the agency fees (if you rented through a real estate agency), and the inventory fees
→ the first month’s rent

Find out more
www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/N349
www.adil38.org

Insuring your accommodation

All rented accommodation must be insured by the tenant for rental risks: fire, water damages, or explosions. However, this insurance does not necessarily cover possessions you have in your home, for example in case of burglary. You can get information from banks, student insurance companies or any other insurance company, which offer rental insurance contracts and “multi-risk” insurance contracts. You will have to provide a certificate of rental insurance to your owner or the agency.

Entry Inventory (“État des lieux d’entrée”)

An inventory is a procedure whereby the landlord and the tenant review the state of the apartment. You must be present during the inventory. It defines the responsibilities of each party in case of dispute. At the end of the stay, it will be compared to the exit inventory. It usually takes place when receiving the keys. If the inventory is carried out by a professional, you will have to pay for a part of their fees. If the accommodation is furnished, a detailed list of all the furniture must be added to the inventory.

Good to know
During the inventory, pay close attention to any defects or damage in the accommodation and do not forget to read the inventory report before you sign it. A copy of the inventory must be given to you. If you want to modify or add to the inventory, you must send a registered letter with proof of delivery (recommandé avec accusé de réception) detailing the modifications you want to make, within 10 days after moving in.

Water, electricity, gas, internet and a landline

If water, electricity and gas are not included in the rental charges (in university residences, they are usually included), you have to take out contracts with providers of your choosing, even if you already have access to water, electricity and gas when you move in.

Find out more
https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Accommodation > Long stay accommodation > The private rental sector
Section Practical Matters > Keeping in touch

Good to know
For any stay longer than 3 months, Doctoral students can apply for housing allowance (called “APL” or “ALS” in France) to the CAF (“Caisse d’Allocations Familiales”). This financial assistance is granted to people with low incomes. It is calculated based on the type of housing, the amount of the rent, the Doctoral student’s financial resources and his/her personal situation. All applications are submitted online, on the CAF website. Before applying, carry out a simulation, to get an estimate of the allowance you might be granted.

Caution: Visas stating “dispense temporaire de carte de séjour” cannot benefit from housing allowances.

http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
Accommodation > Financial assistance with accommodation
OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

To open a bank account you need to provide a proof of address in France, thus it is not possible to start the process before your arrival. Please also note that temporary accommodations do not always make it possible to get such a document. A French bank account is almost essential (though not mandatory). Wage payments and health costs reimbursements can be paid only to a French bank account.

Steps to follow to open a bank account:

➜ Choose a bank: check if your bank in your home country has a partnership with a French bank, or if your institution has concluded a privileged partnership.

➜ Make an appointment with a bank advisor.

➜ Prepare your file with the requested documents. The documents usually required are:

- proof of identity (ID card, or passport with visa)
- proof of address with your name on it (rental agreement or ‘bail’, certificate of university students residence, rent receipt, electricity bill, etc.)

➜ Student card (optional, in case of special offers)

Good to know
Opening an account is usually free of charge, but some services may have to be paid for (credit card, money transfers, overdraft facilities, etc.). Get as much information as possible and do not hesitate to compare several bank offers!

Find out more
https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Practical Matters > Managing your budget

TAKING OUT CIVIL LIABILITY INSURANCE

In addition to health and rental liability insurances, this is the third mandatory insurance in France. It covers any damage you might unintentionally cause to others. All banks, student health insurance companies (LMDE or SMERRA) and other insurance companies propose civil liability insurance contracts. If you have taken out a multi risk housing insurance, it usually contains the civil liability insurance: check with your insurance provider!

Good to know
Some laboratories require you to take out civil liability insurance before you arrive in France. It is possible to get this insurance from a Euraxess partner insurance provider, by registering to ISSO’s ‘Guest researchers database’. For more information, contact the Human Resources department of your university or host organization, or ISSO.

Find out more
https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Practical Matters > Managing your budget

OBTAINING A CVEC ATTESTATION

Except if you are doing a joint doctorate which includes a registration fee exemption, you will need to obtain a CVEC attestation before being able to complete your enrollment at the Doctoral college. The Student and Campus Life Contribution (CVEC) finances students’ services: health, sports, culture and student initiatives. Don’t confuse the CVEC with health insurance! There is no link between the two, they are entirely separate.

Find out more
Section Preparing a Doctorate > Enrolment in the first year

COMPLETING YOUR ENROLLMENT

By this stage, the director of your Doctoral school will have validated your application regarding all educational matters and forwarded your file to the Doctoral college (for more information about their function, see ‘the doctoral stakeholders’ section in this guide). The Doctoral college will send you an email to make an appointment for your administrative enrollment, the last step to validate the start of your Doctorate. During the enrollment process, you will have to pay the enrollment fees. You will then be given your student card, proof that you are now officially a Doctoral student at the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes.

Find out more
Section Preparing a doctorate > Enrolment in the first year
REGISTERING WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance ("Sécurité sociale")

The registration process with health insurance varies depending on your status and your nationality. If you have any questions regarding the procedure you have to follow, feel free to ask the Human Resources department or the International Students & Scholars Office - ISSO.

You have a French employment contract

Registration is not automatic. You will need to fill in a form called "demande d’ouverture de droits" or "demande d’affiliation", enclose all the required documents, and send it all to your health insurance organization:

➔ If you have a "Passeport talent" visa: you must send your registration file to: CPAM de Paris, SRI/Talents, 75948 Paris Cedex 19. The CPAM in Paris will also be your contact for all reimbursement matters.

➔ If your employment contract is less than 10 months long, and you do not have a "Passeport talent" visa: you must send your registration file to the CPAM of your place of residence.

➔ If your employment contract is more than 10 months long, and you do not have a "Passeport talent" visa: you must send your registration file to the MGEN of your place of residence; you can go directly to the MGEN agency.

You do not have a French employment contract

➔ You are from Europe (EU/EEA) or Switzerland: you must have a European Health Insurance Card, valid for the whole duration of your stay. If you do not have a European Health Insurance Card, or as soon as it expires, you must register with the French health insurance (CPAM), via their website dedicated to new international students: https://etudiant-etranger.ameli.fr/#/.

➔ You are from Quebec: you must have a certificate issued by the RAMQ, covering you during the whole duration of your study stay in France. If not, contact the RAMQ immediately.

➔ For all other nationalities: after completing your administrative enrollment at university, you have to register with the French health insurance, CPAM, via their website dedicated to new international students: https://etudiant-etranger.ameli.fr/#/.

This registration is free of charge. Only three documents are necessary to start registering: your passport, your visa, and a proof of registration at university (the ‘certificat de scolarité’, issued by the Doctoral college).

Advice

Always keep a health insurance certificate with you, in case you go to a doctor, or in the event of an accident.
Additional health insurance (“complémentaire santé” or “mutuelle”)

The health insurance « sécurité sociale » covers only part of the medical expenses. To be better reimbursed, we highly recommend you take out an additional health insurance, known as « complémentaire santé » or « mutuelle ».

Many insurance providers have special offers for students. Take your time to compare the different offers according to your needs.

If you have a limited budget, for example if you have no employment contract, you can also apply for the additional health insurance called ‘CMU-C’ at the CPAM. This additional health insurance is free of charge, but is subject to residency and financial resources conditions.

Good to know

In Grenoble, all PhD students enrolled in one of the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes institutions can visit general practitioners (and some specialists) for free at the Students Health Centres. Their team provide information, consultations, and preventive actions throughout the academic year.
https://centre-sante.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/

In Valence, the Youth Health Centre also is available for students for free, providing consultations and preventive actions. 
http://www.etudierendromeardeche.fr/fr/vie-etudiante/sante/centre-de-sante-jeunes-de-valence/

Find out more
https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Health

CPAM
https://amel.fr/

MGEN
www.mgen.fr
VALIDATING YOUR VISA OR APPLYING FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT

The procedure to follow depends on the type of your visa:

→ If your visa bears the mention "dispense temporaire de carte de séjour": you have nothing to do.

→ If your visa bears the mention "carte de séjour à solliciter...": you have to apply for a first residence permit, upon your arrival, at the Prefecture office of your place of residence.

→ If your visa bears the mention "Étudiant" or "Passeport talent Chercheur": you have to validate your visa online. Within the first 3 months upon your arrival in France, as soon as you have a fixed address, go to the ‘Direction Générale des Étrangers en France’ website:


Once you have completed the procedure, and paid for the resident permit tax, you will receive a confirmation by email. Keep this document for the whole duration of your stay, and particularly if you are traveling.

FAMILY

- If you came with your spouse or with adult children (18 years old or more), depending on their - and your - visa type, they will have to either validate it online, or apply for a residence permit upon arrival. The ISSO team - Immigration assistance department is here to guide and accompany them in these procedures.

- If you came with underage children (-18 years old), they do not need any document to stay in France. But if you plan to travel out of France, you will have to ask for a movement document (‘document de circulation’, called ‘DCEM’), upon request by post, from the Prefecture. For more information, contact ISSO’s Immigration assistance department.
FINDING OUT ABOUT CHILDCARE AND SCHOOLING FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Childcare

There are several childcare solutions: nursery, day-care center, micro-nursery, childminder, home care... Your choice will be based on several criteria: your child’s age, where you live or where you work, your time constraints, your needs (occasional or regular), your financial resources, etc.

For more information, feel free to contact ISSO’s administrative assistance department.

Find out more
https://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Family > Baby sitting

www.mon-enfant.fr
Section “Les modes d’accueil de la petite enfance”
The “CAF – Mon enfant” application is free and available for Android and IOS users, to help you find the right childcare solution.

IN GRENOBLE: THE “PÔLE ACCUEIL PETITE ENFANCE” (CENTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD)

A single information and advice center, dedicated to guiding and assisting parents in their search for the right childcare solution. It is also the only, central place for all nursery enrollments.

https://www.grenoble.fr/lieu/1390/137-pole-accueil-petite-enfance.htm

Schooling of children

French school system

In France, going to school is a right for all children. Schooling is mandatory for girls and boys from 3 to 16 years old. Public school is secular and free, while private ones are pay-schools. Depending on the age of the child, his/her schooling will be organized between kindergarten (“école maternelle”), elementary school (“école élémentaire”), middle school (“college”) and high school (“lycée”).

Enrollment procedures

→ For enrollment in kindergarten (“école maternelle”) or elementary school (“école élémentaire”, also called “primaire”), you must contact the town hall of the city or town you live in.

→ For enrollment in middle school (“college”) or high school (“lycée”), you must book an appointment with your child in your closest “Centre d’Information et d’Orientation” (“CIO”, Information and Guidance Center). Your child will take a placement test and will be redirected to the class corresponding to his/her level.

Find out more
http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en/
Section Family > Schooling of children
https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/N31347
Information on schooling organization is available in the form of bilingual welcome booklets, on the French administration official website, page ‘École primaire (maternelle ou élémentaire) pour un élève venant de l’étranger’

http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

NEED HELP? YOUR CONTACTS

You have left your country, on your own or with your family, to enjoy a new experience in a foreign country. Although you had prepared yourself for this trip, you may feel a certain “cultural shock” to a greater or lesser degree, and a sense of homesickness. This is quite normal and is part of your adaptation process.

Doctoral students’ research work is very time-consuming, but it is essential for a good balance to cultivate social bonds and to keep time for leisure.

Do not forget that you are not alone! You will find in this last section contacts and privileged interlocutors to facilitate your integration.
Primary contacts for PhD students

For all pedagogical questions, about your Doctoral college enrollment, your classes or exams, feel free to contact the administrative staff of your Doctoral school.

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For doctoral students with an employment contract

- Questions about paid vacation, social security registration, sick leaves, working time, etc

- Help with administrative steps to take upon arrival and everyday life practical matters
- Welcome and support for childcare and the schooling of children.

- Social security registration
- Getting the medical card "Carte vitale"
- Reimbursement of medical expenses, sick leave

- Free visits to general practitioners and certain specialist doctors
- Stress management, psychological support

- Personal, administrative or financial difficulties

- The **doctoral dissertation supervisor**, your main contact
- Doctoral school
- Doctoral college
- Human resources of your university or research organization
- ISSO
- CPAM, MGEN
- Students' health center (Grenoble)
- Youth health center (Valence)
- CROUS social service
Welcome centers

In Grenoble and Valence: ISSO - International Students and Scholars Office

The International Students & Scholars Office – ISSO is a welcome and support service dedicated for international students, PhD students, researchers and their families.

The ISSO multilingual team welcomes and helps you upon arrival, and throughout your whole stay, for different administrative steps:

- Accommodation
- Visa validation and residence permits
- Opening of a bank account, insurances, social security, CAF
- Practical matters, learning french, family, schooling and baby sitting

Grenoble
iCampus – Welcome center
1 025 avenue centrale - Domaine universitaire
38 402 St Martin d’Hères
isso@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
PhD students accommodation:
scholarhousing@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
Monday - Friday, 9am - 5pm (6pm in September)

Valence
3 different sites
Maison de l’étudiant Drôme Ardèche :
Monday and Thursday
Site Briffaut, Esisar: Tuesday
Site Briffaut, DSDA: Friday
isso-valence@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

Students health centers and preventive medicine services

Students and PhD students from different university campuses can consult doctors, nurses, or psychologists, without having to pay in advance, at the students health centers or preventive health services.

In Grenoble
Students health centers
+ https://centre-sante.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/

In Valence
Youth health center
+ http://www.etudierendromeardeche.fr/fr/vie-etudiante/sante/centre-de-sante-jeunes-de-valence/

Services for students with disabilities

The aim of these services (“Services Accueil Handicap”) is to ensure access by students with disabilities to all university training programs and help them participate fully in student life. These services thus accompany in their studies all PhD students confronted with difficulties related to illness or disability, whether permanent or temporary.

In Grenoble and Valence
Résidence Les Taillées, bâtiment B - 271 rue de la Houille Blanche
Domaine universitaire de St Martin d’Hères/Gières

In Chambéry and Le Bourget-du-Lac
+ www.univ-smb.fr/formation/amenagements-specifiques/etudiant-e-s-en-situation-de-handicap/

CROUS social services

In the event of personal or financial difficulties, you can make an appointment with a CROUS social worker, directly online via the website mesrdv.etudiant.gouv.fr, or by contacting the CROUS social service of the city you study in.

+ http://www.crous-grenoble.fr/aidessociales/contact/

Harassment and discrimination

Measures for combating harassment and discrimination have been implemented in different universities and schools. To find the appropriate contact, visit the Doctoral college website, section ‘Harcèlement pendant le doctorat’.

+ https://doctorat.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/fr/pendant-la-these/harcelement-pendant-le-doctorat
**Associations for PhD students**

The Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes boasts many Doctoral student associations. In all disciplines, and with the aim of uniting young researchers, they promote mutual aid, experience sharing and the valorization of research work.


**Associations for international students**

**In Grenoble: the IntEGre association**

IntEGre is a dynamic association of Grenoble students whose aim is to welcome international students within the Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes, and thereby facilitate cultural exchanges through a variety of activities, outings, special welcome evenings, and discoveries of local and national heritage. The association organizes in particular at the beginning of the university year, visits round the campus and the city of Grenoble, as well as ‘discovery’ weekends.

IntEGre also offers a program of student-mentors: as soon as you become a member of IntEGre, you can be put in contact with a student volunteer who is already in Grenoble. This person will help you in your settling-in process and will show you round the city and the campus.

+ [www.integre-grenoble.org](http://www.integre-grenoble.org)
+ Facebook "Association IntEGre"

**In Valence: the Inter’Val association**

Inter’Val is a students’ association dedicated to welcoming and integrating international students in Valence. They organize outings, cultural visits, events, one-day or weekend activities. It is also possible to get into a mentoring program, and be put in contact with a French student.

+ Facebook "Association inter’Val Valence"

**In Chambéry and Le Bourget-du-Lac: the Foreigners Association Chambéry**

The Foreigners Association Chambéry puts French and international students in contact through various types of cultural and fun activities.

+ Facebook "Foreigners Association Chambéry"

**Student community associations**

**In Grenoble**

These associations organize cultural, festive and sporting events. They can also help you with your settling-in procedures.

Find the full list in the associations’ online directory, on the ‘EVE’ (‘Espace Vie Etudiante’) website:


**In Chambéry and Le Bourget-du-Lac**

You can find the list of students’ associations on the Université Savoie Mont-Blanc website:


**The “Maison de l’International” in Grenoble**

The “Maison de l’International” (International House) is a privileged place of welcome, exchange, information, documentation and exhibitions devoted to international matters. As it is managed by the City of Grenoble, you will find information on the international associations present in the city.

+ [http://www.grenoble.fr/98-maison-de-l-international.htm](http://www.grenoble.fr/98-maison-de-l-international.htm)

**Emergency contacts**

+ All kinds of emergencies - France & Europe : 112
+ Medical emergencies : 15
+ Police : 17
+ Fire services : 18
+ Deaf and mute emergencies : 114 (text messages only)
+ Pharmacies on duty: [www.servigardes.fr](http://www.servigardes.fr) or 0825 74 20 30 (€0,15/min). [www.3237.fr](http://www.3237.fr) or 3237 (€0,35/min)
+ Grenoble Campus security service (St Martin d’Hères/Clères) : 04 76 82 82 82
+ Poisoning and intoxication: 04 72 11 69 11
+ Grenoble hospital (CHU) : 04 76 76 75 75
+ Chambéry hospital : 04 79 96 50 50
+ Annecy hospital : 04 50 63 63 63
+ Valence hospital : 04 75 75 75 75
+ SOS Médecin 24/7 : 36 24 (€0,12/min)
+ Home visits 24/7.
  + Be careful: overtaxed consultations.
+ In Grenoble : Médecin 7 sur 7 : 04 76 86 59 00 84 cours Jean Jaurès, Grenoble
  + Tram E arrêt “Condorcet”
  + Walk-in service, 7days/week, 8am to midnight
  + Be Careful: overtaxed consultations after 8pm, on Sats after 12pm, and on Sundays.
+ In Grenoble : Maison Médicale de Garde, at the Hôpital Couple Enfant (under the civil hospital porch) : General practitioners consultations. from Monday to Friday 8pm to midnight, on Sats from 12pm to midnight, on Sundays and bank holidays from 8am to midnight.
USEFUL ACRONYMS

**ADIIJ**: Association Départementale Information Initiative Jeunesse
**BU**: Bibliothèque Universitaire
**CAF**: Caisse d’Allocations Familiales
**CDD**: Contrat à Durée Déterminée
**CDI**: Contrat à Durée Indéterminée
**CHU**: Centre Hospitalier Universitaire
**CMU-C**: Couverture Maladie Universelle Complémentaire
**CPAM**: Caisse Primaire d’Assurance Maladie
**CROUS**: Centre Régional des Oeuvres Universitaires et Scolaires
**CUEF**: Centre Universitaire d’Études Françaises
**CVEC**: Contribution Vie Étudiante et de Campus
**ECTS**: European Credit Transfer System
**ED**: École Doctorale
**EEE**: Espace Économique Européen
**EVE**: Espace Vie Étudiante
**FLE**: Français Langue Étrangère
**GEG**: Gaz Electricité de Grenoble
**ISSO**: International Students and Scholars Office
**LMD**: Licence, Master, Doctorat
**LMDE**: La Mutuelle Des Étudiants
**MGEN**: Mutuelle Générale de l’Éducation Nationale
**RATP**: Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens
**RH**: Ressources Humaines
**RIB**: Relevé d’Identité Bancaire
**RU**: Restaurant Universitaire
**SAH**: Service Accueil Handicap
**SIBRA**: Société Intercommunale des Bus de la Région Annécienne
**SMERRA**: Société Mutualiste des Étudiants de la Région Rhône-Alpes
**SNCF**: Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer
**SUAPS**: Service Universitaire des Activités Physiques et Sportives
**TAG**: Transport de l’Agglomération Grenobloise
**TCF**: Test de Connaissance du Français
**TD**: Travaux Dirigés
**TGV**: Train Grande Vitesse
**TP**: Travaux Pratiques
**UE**: Union Européenne
**VLS-TS**: Visa Long Séjour valant Titre de Séjour
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Contact: isso@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

http://international.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/en