

Space Research and Planetary Sciences  
Division of the Physikalisches Institut,  
the University of Bern.

# Survival Guide

June 2014



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**UNIVERSITÄT  
BERN**

Welcome to the Space Research and Planetary Sciences Division of the Physikalisches Institut of the University of Bern.

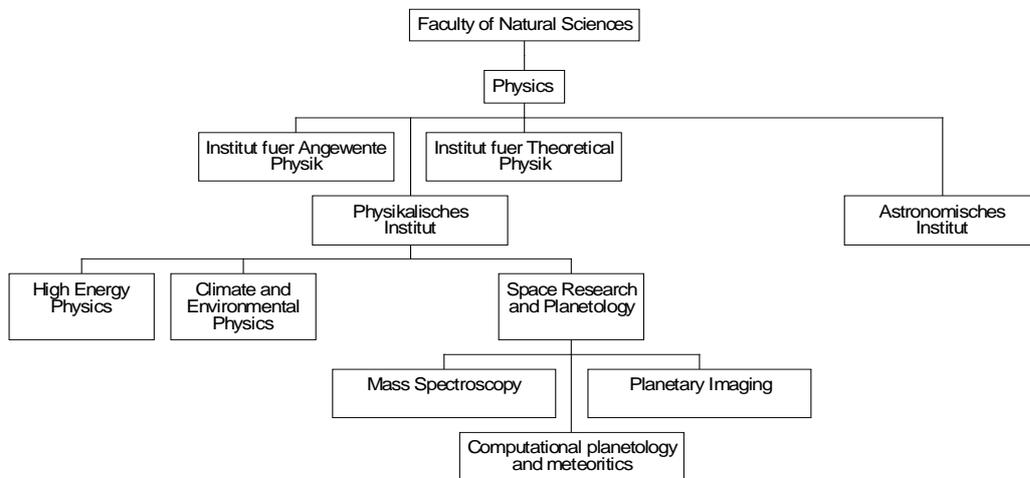
This document is intended to give you some help in getting you settled in as quickly as possible and introduced to the Division. For new Swiss members of staff (and especially people from Bern), some of this information you will be aware of already. However, please take time to read this as it also contains information on how the Division is run and on who is responsible for what inside the Division. Most people you need to speak to are referred to by the title of their task. The member of staff currently responsible for that task is given at the end of the document.

### **Quick facts**

- Tel no. of Sekretariat : 00-41-31-631-4404
- Fax no. : 00-41-31-631-4405
- Web Address: <http://space.unibe.ch>
- Postal address: Physikalisches Institut, Abteilung WP, Sidlerstr. 5, CH-3012 Bern, Switzerland.

### **Where do we fit in?**

The Division is part of the Faculty of Natural Sciences ([www.unibe.ch/organisation/fakultaeten.html](http://www.unibe.ch/organisation/fakultaeten.html)). Physics is one of several disciplines in the faculty (e.g. biology, chemistry, biochemistry are also within this faculty). The physics discipline is separated into 4 major institutes (see Figure 1) which deal with various aspects of applied and theoretical physics and astronomy. The Physikalisches Institut is itself separated into 3 experimental disciplines, one of which covers space research and planetary sciences. The Space Research and Planetary Sciences Division has four main working groups. Although this structure appears very hierarchical, the groups interact strongly and inter-disciplinary research is encouraged.



**Figure 1** A section of the organigram of the faculty showing the hierarchy above the Division of Space Research and Planetary Sciences.

**What to do before you arrive**

Once it is agreed that you can take up a position in Bern, you should first contact the Administrative Assistant of the Physikalisches Institut. She is responsible for clarifying your work permit and making sure you are registered with the police. She normally needs a passport photo and some personal data.

You need to open a bank account so that you can be paid. Be careful here because the costs of banking vary enormously from firm to firm in Switzerland. (The most famous ones tend to be quite expensive). The Post also offers banking and is a cheap alternative. The Administrative Assistant needs to know the account number as soon as possible. You are paid on (or just before) the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month.

If you compute your salary in your own currency with current exchange rates, you will normally get a slight feeling of delight. But be aware that the cost of living in Switzerland is higher than in most countries in Europe. However, in general, it is probably fair to say that, relatively speaking, you will not be worse off here than in a corresponding position elsewhere in Europe.

You need to get somewhere to live. This can take some time so you are advised to start looking for an apartment before you arrive in Bern. This is in principle your responsibility. [www.homegate.ch](http://www.homegate.ch) and [www.immobern.ch](http://www.immobern.ch) are a good starting point. Also the Division secretaries will provide you with the STADTANZEIGER (the local paper of the city of Bern) if you request them to. If you have exhausted the resources available to you via web sites and newspaper ads or if you have language (or other) problems, ask the Division secretaries for assistance.

1000 CHF per month including additional costs for a single person, 2 room flat would be more than reasonable. Note that most Swiss flats come with a fully-functional kitchen installed and these are normally of much higher standard than you would get elsewhere in Europe.

All landlords demand liability insurance (Haftpflichtversicherung) especially if you come from overseas. It covers you for all damage that you may do by accident (E.g. You trip over in the street and stick your head through a shop window. This insurance will cover the shop's costs in replacing their window. Your health insurance will cover your head of course.) You can check [www.versicherungs-center.ch](http://www.versicherungs-center.ch) for prices but this is typically 150 CHF per year. This insurance will also cover the "wear and tear" costs for a flat when you need to have minor repairs done or you move out.

You have quite a number of possibilities about where to live. The Institute is directly above the railway station and the public transport in Switzerland is outstanding. Hence you can live a long way away from Bern and still be in your office with a sensible commute. I know of some people living in Germany and commuting to Bern. Others live in the French side of Switzerland (e.g. Fribourg). Closer in there are satellite villages around Bern which are quiet and pleasant. The city itself is busy and more lively of course. There is a lot of choice. Roughly speaking Zürich and Basel are a 1 h commute (one way), villages/small towns (e.g. Worb and Burgdorf) are about 30 minutes away or less. Neuchâtel and Fribourg are 30-45 minutes away. Geneva at 2 hours is probably a bit much!

Health insurance is obligatory in Switzerland. The basic insurance can be as low as 300 CHF per month but is strongly dependent on the options you take. You can get additional insurance (Privat- and Halbprivatversicherung giving you a choice of which doctor or hospital you can go to and/or other special coverage) but this can be quite expensive. You can look at [www.comparis.ch](http://www.comparis.ch) or [www.krankenkassen-center.ch](http://www.krankenkassen-center.ch).

Try to make sure that a computer will be available for you as soon as you arrive. Prompt your supervisor about this about 3-4 weeks before you arrive in Bern.

### **What to do when you first arrive - Institute things**

No-one expects you to work towards your Nobel Prize in the first week you are here. Get the administration and organizational stuff out of the way! The division has an administrative check-list (in German) which the division secretary will go through with you. There are other things for you to do, however. These are noted in a small table in the Appendix.

You should first see the Administrative Assistant. She will tell you if you need to go to the police to clarify your work permit. Do this first.

Your supervisor is responsible for showing you your office. The Division Secretaries will fill out a form for you so you can get your key to the office and a house badge. The office key is called a 9000 key. This allows you access to every office in the Division (including your own). You are, of course, expected to use this key with discretion. It is especially important to keep rooms locked if they are unoccupied. Theft (e.g. money and computers) and some vandalism does occur occasionally. This is particularly important for all offices on the ground-floor which have immediate access to the street.

The house badge gives you access to the building at weekends and in the evenings. After 19:00 (earlier on the days before public holidays) the external doors are closed and access is only possible by placing the badge on one of the card readers.

The Division Secretaries will provide you with additional information and a new telephone list.

The Division has a coffee room (room 919). Between 10:00 -10:30 every morning, most people in the Division meet in this room for morning coffee. This is not mandatory but it is an important opportunity to meet people you need to see. Get your supervisor to introduce you to the rest of the Division during morning coffee. This is the most effective way of getting your face known to everyone. If you can get your supervisor or someone else to show you around the entire department (including the labs and the construction department) so much the better.

With luck, your supervisor will have already organized a computer for you. If not, you need to talk to the Computer Procurement Officer. He is also responsible for getting you PC software. This costs money so he may need to confirm procurement with your supervisor.

Computers need setting-up with network connections. This is normally done by the network computer guru. Contact him to make adjustments to your set-up. If you use Linux and Linux/Windows combinations and are having trouble, some of the students (too numerous to mention) are good sources of information.

You will normally need an account on the Uni Bern e-mail server. The Division Secretary will normally handle this for you.

You need to register with the ExWi library on the first floor. The staff are extremely helpful. Most journals you would need are available on-line and the bookshelves are well stocked. The library has implemented an automatic system which allows you to check out books yourself via barcode scanners. There is a User Guide available (in English and German) to help you. Note that being late returning a book can get expensive quickly. If a book is not available and you think the ExWi library should have a copy, there are yellow forms which should be filled in and signed by the responsible person in the Division. This is normally a formality because the money available for new books is quite generous.

The Administrative Assistant will provide you with a card which allows you to eat in the student Mensa for a reduced price (called a "Legi"). (Most of the Division can be found there between 12:00 and 12:30).

Stationary can be found in the Sekretariat in cupboards. Please try to keep this tidy.

The Division FAX machine is in the Sekretariat.

To make photocopies you will need an access code. The Sekretariat can provide with the code.

## **Safety**

This is an experimental physics division and consequently we have some bits of equipment around which, if handled incorrectly, can lead to serious consequences. A fact sheet is available (and should accompany this document). We also have a dedicated safety officer. If you are in anyway uncertain, ASK!

### **Jobs you are expected to do.**

The University and the Division run on the principle of “self-administration”. The Division has to manage itself. It also has to support the education of undergraduates and masters students of physics and other subjects (such as chemistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine and medicine, etc. in which physics forms a part of the basic education in early years). This is done in co-operation with the Physikalisches Institut, the Institute for Applied Physics, the Institute for Theoretical Physics, and the Astronomy Institute.

You will be expected to contribute to the running of the Division in some way. The exact task will depend upon your own skills. PhD. students are often asked to help supervise 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year practical students. (This must normally be done in German.) Other jobs may include computer network development or web site design, for example. Higher level staff may be required to support the advanced practical students (for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> semester students) or take tutorials for 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduates.

The Division is in a high profile science and we are often asked to support public relations exercises. Your support for “events” is also expected.

Kaffeedienst (coffee duty) is the least loved job. Junior staff have to load the dishwasher after the coffee breaks twice a day; once in the morning and then in the afternoon again. This is allocated for 2.5 days at a time. This means that you probably only have to do this once every 3 or 4 months if there are enough Junior staff on hand. If you are going to be absent during your allocation you must find a substitute to do the coffee duty during that time. **You will rarely get thanked for doing this job but it is actually very very important!**

### **Things you need to do in the first months**

If you are staying in Bern for more than one year and you have a foreign driving license, you need to exchange it for a Swiss one. This is not normally a problem if you do this within one year of arriving in Bern and you have a license from an EU state. If you bring a car and wish to import it, you also need to do this within one year. The car needs to pass through a Swiss inspection. This is quite careful and the worst of it is that the engine itself needs to be so clean that you can eat your breakfast off it. We recommend that you go to an experienced garage mechanic to get this done.

### **Meeting rooms**

The Division has a meeting room (A111) which can be booked for meetings of up to about 15 people. The Sekretariat has the timetable and you should always book the room with her well in advance.

The Division also has access to a video-conferencing room (A119) which probably does not get used as often as it should.

For larger meetings, rooms can be hard to find in semester. Nice meeting rooms are in the Uni-S building which is about 200 m walk from us. The University main building also has some meeting rooms. The Division Secretaries can help you book something.

If you have prominent guests for a meeting, you can consider using the Haus der Universität which provides the meeting room. Lunch and coffee services are also possible. It is not particularly cheap but it is convenient being within walking distance (around 7 minutes) from us.

### **Journal Club**

The Division runs a "journal club" called Space Club which meets in A111 at 13:15 on Tuesdays in the semester which you are encouraged to attend.

### **Seminars**

The Division runs a weekly seminar within the semester every Wednesday at 14:15. Ideas for new speakers are very much appreciated.

### **Things you need to do when you want to travel**

Business travel must be approved by your supervisor and by the finance supervisor. You need to get a business travel form (from the Sekretariat) in which you must estimate the costs of your trip. This form has to be completed stating your dates of travel, the reason and how you would like to travel. Have this form signed by your supervisor and the financial supervisor of the Division before handing it over to the Division secretary. The budgeting of your trip does not have to be perfect but it does have to be accurate to, say, 10%. You must clarify with your supervisor which account is to be debited as a result of your trip.

Your business trip should be organized by the Sekretariat. You must specify exactly how you want your trip organized (dates/times of departures, rental car requirements, hotel requirements). The Division secretary will then discuss with the travel agent for you and come back with a proposal. Check precisely this proposal. Once you give her the go-ahead at this point and airline tickets have already been printed out, please be aware that any changes to your travel arrangements especially airline tickets with a PEX Tariff (fixed dates of departure and arrival) may be costly! (Note particularly issues concerning credit card guarantees for hotels.) The Division can guarantee reservations for hotel accommodations with our business credit card in emergencies, but we are not allowed to put any room charges on there for you. If you need to reserve a room, it is advisable to use your own credit card if you have one. You are in general required to take the cheapest available option (within reason). Trips of < 5-6 hours by train are normally most cost-effective and efficient.

When you get back from your business trip, you must specify in detail your expenses. An Excel spreadsheet to assist you is available (see <http://space.unibe.ch/en/various/internal/computing.html>). The form is called "Reisespesen". Once you have completed this, you must pass your tickets and receipts and (if you have paid for something with your credit card) your credit card report, together with the claim form to the finance administrator. She will refund you through your bank account.

### **Holidays**

You will have a holiday allocation. Usually there will be 23 days per year for new employees if you start at the beginning of the year. The Division secretaries can give you further information regarding your holiday allocation. All new employees get a Excel spreadsheet on which their number of vacation days are written. It is your duty to inform the Sekretariat when you are taking a holiday or other absence from the institute. You should mark this on the holiday calendar hanging on the wall of the Sekretariat. It is asked that you fill out the days of absence in the Excel document "Absence Table", worksheet "Absence overview". In the worksheet "Key figures" you will find a summary of the balance to be recorded in the Time Management tool. It is a requirement of the University of Bern that all employees submit an annual report of absences (in November). We strongly encourage you to fill out the spreadsheet after each absence.

During the semester (around 21<sup>st</sup> Sep – 21<sup>st</sup> Dec, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb – 1<sup>st</sup> Jun approximately) you are strongly discouraged from taking holidays. You should discuss this with your supervisor. Students and Post-Doc. are required to ask the Director of the Institute to take holiday during the semester! Please note that at the end of the semesters, there are student examinations and the professorial staff will need your help to supervise (i.e., watch the students and collect their papers).

### **Working time**

The working hours are specified in a welcome document (Information für Angestellte der Universität Bern) which you should receive from the University. Of course, we are at a University and for academic staff there is some leniency concerning the times you need to be present in the Institute. However, you are expected to work 42 hours per week (or the appropriate percentage thereof if working part-time). An EXCEL spreadsheet to assist you monitoring your hours is available at

<http://www.pers.unibe.ch/> and look under Arbeitsverhältnis.

Filling-in of this form is mandatory for Technical and Administrative Staff. New academic staff should discuss their working hours with their supervisor to ensure there are no misunderstandings.

### **Public holidays**

On the following public holidays, the Institute is closed: January 1<sup>st</sup> (New Year's Day), January 2<sup>nd</sup> (Bärzelistag), Easter Monday, Good Friday (April), Ascension Day (May), Pentecost Monday (Whit Monday; June), August 1<sup>st</sup> (Swiss National Day), December 24<sup>th</sup> (half a day), December 25<sup>th</sup>, December 26<sup>th</sup> (Boxing Day/Stefanstag) and December 31<sup>st</sup> (half a day),

On the days immediately before Good Friday, Ascension Day, and August 1<sup>st</sup>, the working day ends one hour earlier. On the fourth Monday of November (for the Zibelemärit) the working day ends two hours early.

### **Illness**

You are required to inform the Sekretariat either via email or telephone call as soon as you can about absence through illness. The Division secretaries will inform your supervisor and co-workers of your absence.

### **Events**

Each year there are two main events for the Division; the Bildungsausflug and the Xmas party. The Bildungsausflug is where the Division pays a visit to an interesting place during the day (in 2013 it was CERN) and then has dinner somewhere in the evening. It is usually at the end of August. The Xmas party is just before Xmas and is normally an evening event. Somebody has to organize these events – which nobody is overly keen on I have to say – but in fact many of the people in the division look forward to it so it's important and your help is appreciated.

We expect a number of special events in the next couple of years or so associated with Rosetta and BepiColombo.

### **Living in Switzerland – a few remarks**

The big supermarkets are Migros and Co-op. They have stores in most places and the large ones have huge selections of food and household items including just about everything you need on a day-to-day basis. Watch out for special offers in these stores which can be appreciably cheaper if you shop wisely. Other stores with cheaper options include Denner, Lidl, Maxi, and Aldi. There are a lot of local shops not belonging to chains which you can investigate for interesting alternatives.

Restaurants are not the cheapest (unless you go for the multinational hamburger joints) but in Bern there are hundreds (344 according to TripAdvisor) to choose from. The Internet is definitely your friend here.

Using the train to go out of weekends is recommended. You are only 45 minutes away from some of the most spectacular mountain scenery and skiing in Europe. (Interlaken is the main access point.) The Lauberhorn race in Wengen takes place in January and takes place on one of many famous slopes within each reach. Members of the Division also get together sometimes for trips to Zermatt where you can ski pretty much all year round. Switzerland is a sort of holiday park in some ways and there are lots of places nearby wanting your money!

If you have a family with school-aged children then you will have to take a look at the school system. There is a book I have found useful called "Going Local – Your guide to Swiss schooling" by Margaret

Oertig (ISBN-Nr.: 978-3-905252-25-5)

(See also

[http://www.bergli.ch/100/con\\_liste.asp?prono=72&ica=1&vSearch&nCurPage&sStartPageNext](http://www.bergli.ch/100/con_liste.asp?prono=72&ica=1&vSearch&nCurPage&sStartPageNext) )  
which can explain the system.

### **Leaving the Division**

When you decide to leave the Institute, please inform the Division secretaries about your plans. A form needs to be completed which requires you to (for example) hand in your keys to the Institute and acquire a signature indicating that you have indeed done it. Please also leave a forwarding address and keep us informed when you move somewhere in the future. (It is important for us to know about the progress of our former employees. It helps us to advise students in the future.)

### **Short facts**

In Switzerland, it is fairly common that people work, by arrangement, less than 100%. Some of our personnel do this. If you need something, don't wait until the last minute. Also note that especially during the semester and at the beginning of March and September it can get quite busy at the Sekretariat, so if you have something which needs to be done by a certain deadline be sure to advise the secretaries as soon as possible, so they can schedule their daily work tasks accordingly and can complete your work on time.

### **Who's who**

The Division comprises around 85 personnel. This gives a brief listing of key people you might need to meet to get yourself "up and running" quickly. If they can't help, they will direct you to someone who can.

- Prof. Willy Benz is the Director of the Physikalisches Institut. He is also one of the three professors who lead the Space Research and Planetary Sciences Division and leads the computational planetology and meteoritics group. He has recently been instrumental in setting up the Center for Space and Habitability (CSH) which is a separate organization under the University.
- Ms. Gisela Herren is the Administrative Assistant and also the secretary of the Director for the Physikalisches Institut. ([gisela.herren@space.unibe.ch](mailto:gisela.herren@space.unibe.ch)) She is also the best source of information for anything to do with personnel policies.
- The Physikalisches Institut has three divisions - high energy physics, climate and environmental physics, and space research and planetary sciences. The Director of the Physikalisches Institut is selected from the professors associated with these groups.
- Prof. Nicolas Thomas is the current head of the Space Research and Planetary Sciences Division and leads the Planetary Imaging Group (PIG) within this division.

- Prof. Peter Wurz is the third (ordinarius) professor in the Space Research and Planetary Sciences Division and leads research in lightweight mass spectrometers and neutral gas analysers for planetary missions.
- Mrs. Kathrin Weyeneth and Ms. Tina Rothenbühler are the Division secretaries ([kathrin.weyeneth@space.unibe.ch](mailto:kathrin.weyeneth@space.unibe.ch); [tina.rothenbuehler@space.unibe.ch](mailto:tina.rothenbuehler@space.unibe.ch)). Ms. Rothenbühler normally takes care of travel arrangements.
- Prof. Kathrin Altwegg is the financial supervisor of the Division. She must counter-sign all financial expenditures (procurement of equipment or travel requests for example).
- PD Dr. Karsten Seiferlin is the safety officer for the Division.
- Ms. Irène Büetler is the financial administrator. She oversees our finances. You will usually contact her with respect to travel expenses and purchase orders for technical and scientific materials.
- Dr. Daniele Piazza leads the technical department. If you are involved in projects connected to the development and manufacture of hardware (for space flight or otherwise), Dr. Piazza should be the first person you talk to after you know what you want.
- Mr. Harry Mischler is responsible for the Workshop and his team will actually manufacture parts for you if needed.
- Mr. Jürg Jost is responsible for the Electronics team. He and his team can assist you with electronics development. Also note that if you require something to be checked electrical safety then you should contact him.
- Mr. Christoph Josi is the current Computer Procurement Officer.
- Mr. Gaetano Borrini is our network set-up guru (room 006c)
- Mr. Jan Dirk Brinksma is the head of the Exact Wissenschaft (ExWi) library.
- Ms. Marianne de Paoli is the receptionist at the front door. You should inform her if you expect visitors or if you need to book a lecture room in the building.

The University Home Page ([www.unibe.ch](http://www.unibe.ch)) contains contact numbers for all university staff.

I hope you find this useful (comments and improvement suggestions welcome) and wish you success in the Division,

Nicolas Thomas

**Appendix – Notes**

This is a small set of notes for new staff to give you hints on where to go.

Task	Who to see
Discuss with the division administrative check-list. The secretary will normally ensure that this gets done.	Sekretariat
Arrange for bank account details to be passed to the Administrative Assistant.	G. Herren
Register with the police (if required).	G. Herren
Arrange to get keys for office and building (part of division check-list).	Sekretariat
Arrange to get computer/mail accounts	K. Weyeneth/Tina Rothenbühler
Get a NEBIS account at the library.	J.-D. Brinksma
Get your photo taken for the division web-site	K. Weyeneth
Get the photocopier access code.	Sekretariat
Make sure you have received the safety fact sheet.	Sekretariat
Remind your supervisor that you are introduced to the department.	Supervisor