

WP1: Identify respective institutional and, if possible, national “documents” towards distance education, Open Science and Open Education in each of the five countries  
Switzerland, University of Geneva

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## 1. National level

National level: acts and policies

Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Act, HEdA): <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2014/691/en>

Federal Education, Research and Innovation Policy 2021-2024:  
<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/eri-policy/eri-21-24.html>

National level: institutions

#### *SERI*

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) “is the federal government's specialised agency for national and international matters concerning education, research and innovation policy. Together with our partners, we seek to ensure that Switzerland remains among the top countries in the area of ERI”.

“As the Confederation’s specialised agency for the ERI system, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation has the following remit:

- Establishing a strategic overview of the Swiss education, research and innovation system and preparing federal performance and resource plans.
- Pursuing international networking activities and ensuring that Switzerland remains involved in European and global education, research and innovation efforts.
- Fostering a broad and diverse range of education opportunities, ensuring that academic and vocational/professional pathways remain fully equivalent and compatible with one another.
- Maintaining and improving the quality and appeal of vocational/professional pathways in keeping with changes taking place on the labour market.
- Safeguarding the high quality of teaching and research at higher education institutions.
- Promoting research and innovation, coordinating tasks and measures of federal research funding institutions.
- Promoting and coordinating Swiss space research activities.
- Coordinating the recognition of foreign professional qualifications (national contact point). It is also responsible for the recognition of cantonal academic baccalaureate qualifications, equivalence in professional qualifications and the recognition of foreign qualifications in vocational and professional education and training and for universities of applied sciences.”

<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/en/home/seri/seri-s-remit.html>

#### *Swissuniversities*

Swissuniversities was founded in 2012. It is the umbrella organisation of the Swiss higher education institutions (HEIs) and promotes cooperation and coordination between the universities and the various types of HEIs. “The Rectors' Conference has several bodies and the following duties and responsibilities:

- It issues statements related to the affairs of the Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions and submits requests to the latter on behalf of the universities.
- In addition, it represents the interests of the Swiss universities at the national and international levels.
- It can take on mandates from the federal government as well as programme and project management.
- Furthermore, the Rectors' Conference maintains an information centre for the academic recognition of the equivalence of domestic and foreign university diplomas (Swiss ENIC; responsibility for issuing professional licences remains reserved to political institutions).”

<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/welcome>

#### *Switch*

Switch "was founded in 1987 under private law by the Swiss Confederation and the eight university cantons that existed at the time" to "create, promote and offer the necessary basis for the effective

use of modern methods of telecomputing in teaching and research in Switzerland, to be involved in and to support such methods. It is a non-profit foundation that does not pursue commercial aims".

Mission: "provide forward-looking and secure basic infrastructure, innovative solutions and targeted advice, and connecting relevant specialist communities, to help universities and other partners within and outside the academic world to make effective and efficient use of the opportunities presented by digitalisation. The services provided outside the academic world create demonstrable value for the foundation's beneficiaries. The aim is to strengthen the joint innovative power and to help expand Switzerland's competitiveness in the long term."

<https://www.switch.ch/about/foundation/>

*AAQ: Swiss agency of accreditation and quality assurance*

"The Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance safeguards and promotes the quality of teaching and research at universities in Switzerland. It is independent, uses internationally recognised methods and is able to draw upon the knowledge and experience of leading experts. The AAQ develops guidelines and quality standards, conducts accreditation and evaluation procedures, and works at an international level. It perceives its role as an external partner for quality assurance and development, and provides a range of supporting services. The AAQ is under the authority of the Swiss Accreditation Council". <https://aaq.ch/en/>

*Swiss Accreditation Council*

"The Swiss Accreditation Council is the joint body of the federal government and cantons for accreditation and quality assurance in the Swiss higher education sector and the accreditation authority for the accreditation procedures pursuant to HEdA. It is not subject to any orders.

The Swiss Accreditation Council promotes the development of a Swiss higher education and research system that meets international quality standards in the interest of science and the arts, acquisition of knowledge, innovation, economy and society in general."

<https://akkreditierungsrat.ch/en/accreditation-council/>

*HEI specialised in distance education*

- UniDistance is a university institute accredited in accordance with the Swiss Higher Education Act (HEdA). Founded in 1992 and recognised by the Confederation in 2004, today it is the leader in distance university education in Switzerland.

<https://unidistance.ch/en/about/portrait>

- Swiss Distance University of Applied Sciences, Member of SUPSI. is a nationally recognised university. Since 1998, it has been offering part-time Bachelor and Master's degrees and continuing education programmes. With more than 20 years of experience in distance learning, it is the leading e-learning university in Switzerland and is an alternative for students looking to combine work, family and study. <https://www.ffhs.ch/en/>

*Research in distance education*

Institute for Research in Open, Distance and eLearning (IFeL) <https://www.ffhs.ch/en/research/ifel>

National level: policies

*Distance education*

No official policy to my knowledge. It seems that distance education is seamlessly included into the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector,

<https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2014/691/en> .

In the 2025-28 vision, it is said that Open and distance education will be included : « Pour faire face aux évolutions, les hautes écoles s'engagent pour une organisation et des prestations flexibles, individualisées et efficaces. Afin d'atteindre ces objectifs, elles pourront notamment s'appuyer sur les possibilités offertes par la digitalisation ainsi que sur le partage des ressources soutenu par le mouvement de la science, formation et innovation ouvertes. Ce changement de paradigme de la culture académique se fonde sur la transparence, le partage d'informations et les collaborations, notamment à travers l'accès gratuit aux publications scientifiques et les données de recherche ouvertes. Il contribue à un écosystème académique fiable, efficace et inclusif, avec des échanges renforcés avec la société, l'économie et la politique. »

[https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fr/themes/politique-des-hautes-ecoles/strategie-et-planification/page-2?amp%3BcHash=f2ce0e5939b65bf3ebc03e242f5bd5f6&tx\\_felogin\\_pi1%5Bforgot%5D=1&cHash=3b4bc42d563f890f0829a92d06983b1e](https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fr/themes/politique-des-hautes-ecoles/strategie-et-planification/page-2?amp%3BcHash=f2ce0e5939b65bf3ebc03e242f5bd5f6&tx_felogin_pi1%5Bforgot%5D=1&cHash=3b4bc42d563f890f0829a92d06983b1e)

<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/themen/digitalisierung/open-education-digital-competencies>

Following Covid, there is an assessment of challenges faced by HEIs moving completely at a distance:  
<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/coronavirus>

Also interesting to notice that foreign upper secondary level credentials obtained at a distance do not give access to Swiss HEIs: <https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/studying/admission-to-universities/foreign-certificates>

It seems that distance education always falls under teaching or education and nothing is specified for distance education per se. However, at the level of the Canton, there is the Geneva 2050 report (October 2022), which sets out the challenges ahead and mentions the digital transformation, <https://www.ge.ch/actualite/rapport-octobre-2022-ge2050-prospective-mise-oeuvre-12-10-2022> .

#### *Open science*

Open Science is approached through Open Access and Open Research Data.

<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/digitalisation/open-science-2021-2024>

#### *Open Access*

Open Access is well on its way since 2017 and benefits from a national strategy and action plan:

<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/digitalisation/open-access/national-strategy-and-implementation-plan>

#### *Open Research Data*

ORD strategy and action plan exist since 2021:

<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/digitalisation/open-research-data/national-strategy-and-action-plan>

#### *Digital skills*

Digital skills are supported since 2019 through projects. In the 2021-24 phase, one project on Open Educational Resources and Open Platforms is funded, i.e. Swiss Digital Skills Academy led by Denis Gillet, EPFL. <https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fr/themes/digitalisation/digital-skills/translate-to-franzoesisch-programmphase-2021-2024>

#### *Open education*

No national policy exists yet.

## 2. University of Geneva

Institutional level – University of Geneva: centres, task forces, working groups

*Centre for continuing and distance education*

“The Centre for Continuing and Distance Education oversees the development of lifelong learning programmes at the University of Geneva (UNIGE). We liaise with both professional and academic networks and make sure that the team in charge of each programme has the tools, resources and innovative approaches they need. We also examine and monitor developments in the field lifelong learning at the Swiss, European and international levels.

The Centre for Continuing and Distance Education (CFCD) is:

- a gateway for candidates wishing to pursue UNIGE’s continuing education programmes
- a touchpoint for businesses and organisations looking to work with UNIGE for their training needs
- a centre of expertise for the conceptualisation, development and management of continuing education programmes, strategic monitoring in the field of lifelong learning, quality control, the use of technology in education and customised training for organisations.”

<https://www.unige.ch/formcont/en/about/role/>

InZone has initiated the demand for a **Certificate of Open Studies** which has been supported by the CFCD and concretised in 2020, in article 65 of the Statut de l’UNIGE

[https://www.unige.ch/index.php/download\\_file/view/386/222/](https://www.unige.ch/index.php/download_file/view/386/222/) .

*Digital transformation office*

The digital transformation office is in charge of defining, managing, reporting and communicating the Action Plan of the Digital Strategy of the University of Geneva. It has issued a strategy, available from: <https://www.unige.ch/numerique/archive-en/digital-strategy/digital-strategy/>

*E-learning centre*

It has been created in 2008 and provides the digital infrastructure, training and service support.

<https://elearning.unige.ch/institution/> , <https://elearning.unige.ch/formation/>

*Make IT easy project – Digital skills*

<https://www.unige.ch/numerique/archives/competences/programme-digital-skills-swissuniversities/make-it-easy-2eme-etape-2021-2024/>

Digital skills competency framework:

[https://www.unige.ch/digitalskills/application/files/8616/5599/2318/A4\\_brochure\\_referentiel\\_de\\_competences\\_Juin2022.pdf](https://www.unige.ch/digitalskills/application/files/8616/5599/2318/A4_brochure_referentiel_de_competences_Juin2022.pdf)

*Open Science*

<https://www.unige.ch/openscience/en/contact>

Institutional level – University of Geneva: policies

*Distance education*

A report has been produced by the CFCD for the Bureau Qualité UNIGE on quality in distance education. The report is the basis for an action plan.

It is aligned with the ENQA norms for distance education, <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Considerations-for-QA-of-e-learning-provision.pdf>

<https://alice.ch/fr/services/eduqua/revision-eduqua/>

Other institutional initiatives with regard to distance education:

- UNIGE Distance Learning Taskforce , <https://www.unige.ch/enseignement-a-distance/en/about/>
- Portal for on-line and blended learning: <https://www.unige.ch/enseignement-a-distance/en/>
- E-assessment group: <https://elearning.unige.ch/ressources/eassessment/>
- Within faculties, some have developed support centres, as is the case for UDREM: <https://www.unige.ch/medecine/udrem/fr/formation-continue/formation-pedagogique-des-enseignants/>

*Open Science*

Open Science is well supported, with a roadmap and policies and services related to Open Access and Open Research Data <https://www.unige.ch/openscience/en>

*Open Education*

No policy exists yet.

Other Swiss institutions – Policies

*ZHAW OER policy*

[https://gmpublic.zhaw.ch/GPMDocProdZPublic/Fuehrungsgrundlagen/Z PY Policy Open Educational Resources engl.pdf](https://gmpublic.zhaw.ch/GPMDocProdZPublic/Fuehrungsgrundlagen/Z_PY_Policy_Open_Educational_Resources_engl.pdf)

*Three reports*

Gutknecht, P., Reimer, R., & Luthi, G. (2020). *Report on the Open Educational Resources (OER) survey at Swiss Universities*. [https://www.eduhub.ch/export/sites/default/files/OER\\_Bericht\\_0.9\\_zhd\\_swissuniversities\\_enL.pdf](https://www.eduhub.ch/export/sites/default/files/OER_Bericht_0.9_zhd_swissuniversities_enL.pdf)

Neumann, J., Schön, S., Bedenlier, S., Ebner, M., Edelsbrunner, S., Krüger, N., Lüthi-Esposito, G., Marín, V. I., Orr, D., Peters, L. N., Reimer, R. T. D., & Zawacki-Richter, O. (2022). Approaches to Monitor and Evaluate OER Policies in Higher Education - Tracing Developments in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, 17(1), 125-147. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6508522>

Treadway, J., Corti, P., & Proudman, V. Z. (2024). *Open Education in European Libraries of Higher Education 2023*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10889503> => Switzerland is included

Swissuniversities funded OER project

Swiss digital skills academy : <https://d-skills.ch/>

### 3. Visual representation

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) Federal acts and policies: Higher Education Act, HEEdA / Federal Education, Research and Innovation Policy	Swiss political level
Swissuniversities Swiss National Science Foundation Switch HEIs' Swissuniversities funded projects (ex. P8 projects, LH MENA)	Swiss Higher Education Institutions' level
UniDistance Swiss Distance University of Applied Sciences	Swiss level: specialised distance education universities
Open science roadmap Open Science charter Awareness, training, rewards, incentives	Institutional level: University of Geneva