



Special Needs information sheet: multiple sclerosis

1 Studying with multiple sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis is an inflammatory disease of the central nervous system (CNS: brain and spinal cord). It is a neurological disease, whose progression is unforeseeable and individual.

The Swiss MS Society distinguishes between three types of progression: firstly, the **primary chronic progressive type**, i.e. MS progresses fast from the beginning and increases constantly. In the case of the **relapsing-remitting type**, the disease manifests itself in acute neurological functional failures which last from days to months and may occur several times a year or every few years. After the acute stage subsides, some of the symptoms disappear again. If the symptoms increase gradually, the disease is of the **secondary chronic progressive type**.

The effects of the disease are as varied as its manifestations. There is no such thing as “typical MS”. Since the disease affects the entire CNS, almost any neurological symptom may occur. Symptoms may range from vision and balance impairment, paralysis of legs, arms and hands, and speaking and swallowing difficulties, to bladder and intestinal disorders. Above and beyond this, patients suffer from physical and psychological fatigue, sensory loss, lack of concentration and memory disorders.¹

2 Information for dealing with students suffering from multiple sclerosis

- The disease does not progress on a constant basis, which means that students' capacity is not constant, either.
- Owing to the episodic progression of the disease, necessary therapies and medical appointments, students may frequently be absent.
- The psychosocial effects of MS and its impacts on participation in activities relevant to studying may be considerable.
- If a student's upper extremities are affected, writing by hand may be difficult or indeed impossible. In such cases, the use of a note taker is helpful.
- Adaptations for examination situations are specified in writing after consultation.

Procedures are stipulated on the internet page of Special Needs:

www.unisg.ch/de/universitaet/hsgservices/beratung/beratungsstellen/special+needs/nachteilsausgleich (for instance separate room, extended deadline for the submission of papers, extended examination time, writing on a laptop instead of by hand).

3 Contact

If you have any questions and concerns, please contact the Special Needs Advice Center:

Special Needs Advice Center; specialneeds@unisg.ch; +41 71 224 31 91

or nachteilsausgleich@unisg.ch; +41 71 224 22 23.

¹ In 80% of cases, the first symptoms occur between the 20th and 40th year of age. Women are more frequently affected by MS than men. In Switzerland, approx. every 560th person suffers from MS, i.e. it is assumed that approx. 15,000 are affected. <https://www.multiplesklerose.ch/de/>.