

INCOMING STUDENTS

hes. so prepared.

International Students Guide

 **Academic
Services** 

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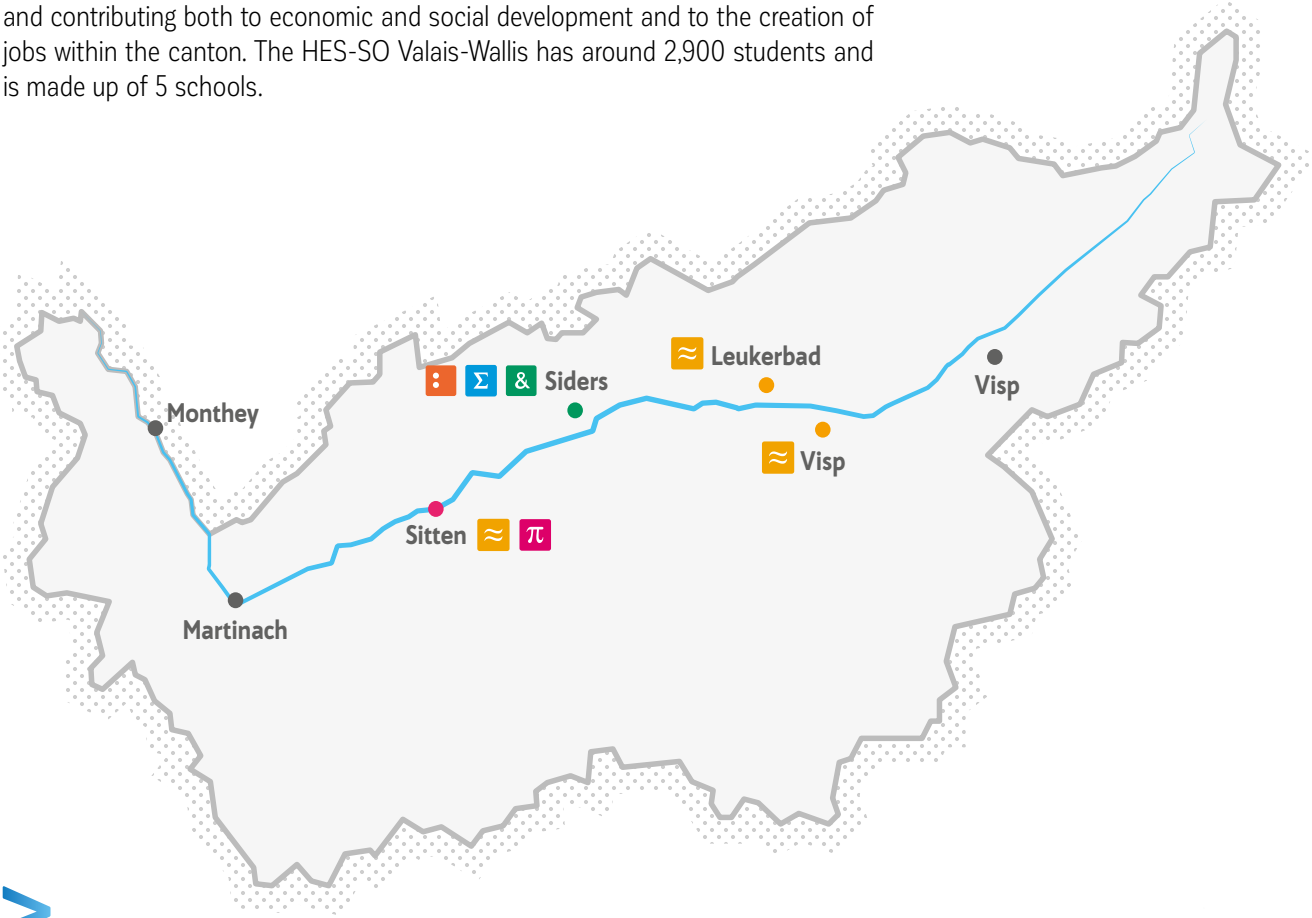
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CHECKLIST






About the HES-SO Valais-Wallis

General Info

With its 10 degree programmes and 9 research institutes, the HES-SO Valais-Wallis is a leading hub of skills and innovation, preparing students for the world of work, and contributing both to economic and social development and to the creation of jobs within the canton. The HES-SO Valais-Wallis has around 2,900 students and is made up of 5 schools.



Facts and figures

- 5 schools schools:
 -  [School of design and university of the arts Valais](#)
 -  [School of Engineering](#)
 -  [School of Management & Tourism](#)
 -  [School of Health Sciences](#)
 -  [School of Social Work](#)
- 10 degree programmes spread between Sion, Sierre, Visp and Leukerbad
- 9 research institutes
- 800 employees
- Over 1,000 research projects

What we offer

Facilities

- Classrooms have modern equipment.
- Registered students have access to the holdings of all libraries in Valais and all university libraries in Switzerland. They have access to the resources of 475 Swiss scientific libraries – more than 30 million physical documents and billions digital books and articles – via the swisscovery platform: <https://hesso.swisscovery.sls.ch>. Media from other libraries can be delivered to the libraries of the HES-SO Valais Wallis within 48 hours.
<https://tube.switch.ch/videos/bff2c4a6>
- Wi-Fi everywhere in the school.
- Exchange students will receive an individual email address and a login from the HES-SO Valais-Wallis.
- Useful information for exchange students can be found on the HES-SO Valais-Wallis intranet/website: general information, schedules, holidays, module descriptions, IT services, etc.

French language courses

Throughout the year, the HES-SO Valais-Wallis may offer weekly French language courses free of charge. These courses are held at the HES-SO Valais-Wallis in Sion.

Meals

The HES-SO Valais-Wallis runs a cafeteria where hot meals and snacks are available at reasonable prices (approx. CHF 10.00 for a hot meal).

Events

Throughout the semester, the Academic Services organises activities for exchange students. This is a chance for you to get to know each other and see some of what Switzerland has to offer.



Academic Services

Mobility

HES-SO Valais-Wallis
Rue de L'industrie 21
1950 Sion
+41 58 606 85 93
Open Mon-Tue-Thu-Fri

HES-SO Valais-Wallis
Route de la Plaine 2
3960 Sierre
+41 58 606 85 93
Open Wed

Mobility Coordinator
Célia Chevrier
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Life in Switzerland

General information

Capital city: Bern

Biggest city: Zurich

National day: 1st August

Population: 8,606,033 (2019)

The territory is divided into 26 cantons, each with its own political organisation. Sion is the capital city of the canton of Valais.

There are four official languages: Swiss German, French, Italian and Romansh. Swiss German is the most widely spoken.

Facts about Switzerland

- **Switzerland is one of the only two countries to have a square flag** – the Vatican has the only other square flag in the world.
- **In Switzerland citizens can challenge any law passed by Parliament.**
- **Switzerland boasts some of the world's most famous inventions** – they created Velcro, cellophane, the Swiss Army Knife, absinthe, the potato peeler, the Helvetica font, LSD, muesli, edible chocolate gold and milk chocolate to name a few.
- **Switzerland is also known as Confederation Helvetica** – which explains the abbreviation CH.
- **Military service is still compulsory for male Swiss citizens** – Switzerland is one of the last western European countries to enforce it, along with Austria. Under the Swiss constitution, male Swiss citizens have to serve in the Swiss army after age 18, while women can opt to volunteer.
- **Sundays in Switzerland are protected by a long list of social laws** – making it illegal to undertake activities such as mowing, hanging out laundry, washing your car or recycling bottles to avoid any disturbances.
- **Women could not vote at federal level until 1971.**

Source: Expatica, "35 facts about Switzerland", 2017, <https://www.expatica.com/ch/moving/about/switzerland-facts-100041/>

Political system

In no other country are people as involved politically as in Switzerland. The Swiss political system is what we call a direct democracy. People vote three to four times a year on various subjects either on a federal, cantonal or municipal level. Any new law or law amendment needs to be voted on.

Valais region

The capital city of Valais is Sion. It has a population of 30,000 and is one of the oldest cities in Switzerland. It has two castles: Valère and Tourbillon.



The medieval old town is particularly well preserved, with a pedestrian area, a farmers' market every Friday, and lots of cultural exhibitions. Sion even has its own private airport.

Sierre is a small city with a population of 16,000. It is the sunniest city in Switzerland, which is why it is called "Cité du Soleil" (City of the Sun). The climate here is particularly suitable for wine production. The vineyards of Valais account for a third of the Swiss wine production.

Customs and habits

- **Punctuality is not just a cliché.** If you are late for an appointment, call as soon as possible to inform the other person.
- **Swiss people are polite and rather reserved.**
- **Cleanliness is an important value in Switzerland.** The cantonal and municipal authorities encourage people to respect public places. Waste must be disposed of in one of the many bins provided for this purpose.
- **Traditional celebrations** often have something to do with food and beverage.

In the canton of Valais:

- Brisolée is a rustic meal which is eaten every year in autumn. It includes grilled chestnuts, cheese, dried meats, fruit, freshly picked grapes and wine.
- Raclette involves melting cheese on a special stove and serving the melted cheese with potatoes, accompanied by a glass of white wine.
- Fondue is a melted cheese dish served in a communal pot over a portable stove and eaten by dipping bread into the cheese.
- Rösti is a potato galette.
- Rivella is a soft drink produced from milk whey.

Useful everyday life information

Currency

The currency in Switzerland is the Swiss franc. On average, the cost of living in Switzerland is higher than in the rest of Europe.

Supermarkets

Migros and Coop are the two main supermarkets. Both have low budget product lines: “Migros Budget”/”MBudget” and “Prix Garantie” for *Coop*. These shops tend to put cheaper items on lower shelves. *Aldi, Denner and Lidl* are cheaper, as they are discount stores.

Opening hours

Shops close at 6.30 pm on weekdays, at 5 pm on Saturdays and are closed on Sundays. *Coop* at the train station and petrol stations are open later at night and on Sundays. Prices in these small shops are the same as in the big ones (no increase).

Phone network – SIM cards

The 3 main operators in Switzerland are *Swisscom, Salt and Sunrise*. SIM cards are available at *Sunrise* shops, *Swisscom* shops, *Salt* shops, the post office or *Mobile Zone* shops.

Rubbish

In Switzerland, rubbish is separated into different bins (glass, plastic and PET, newspapers and household waste). In Valais, special garbage bags are required for garbage collection. These bags are available in all grocery stores and supermarkets, but are expensive, so make sure you only use them for household waste.

Tipping

Prices for hotels, restaurants or taxis include taxes and service. Tips are therefore not compulsory, but common.

Letterbox

Make sure you write your name on your postal letterbox.

Electricity

The standard voltage in Switzerland is 220V. Standard sockets are for 3-pin plugs. Transformers and adapters can be purchased from electronic stores (Interdiscount, MediaMarkt) and supermarkets.

Car

You need to purchase a sticker (“vignette”) for your car to use the motorway. The price is CHF 40.00 for a year. Please note that winter tyres are compulsory in winter.



More information on the motorway sticker can be found [here](#).

SERAFE

This is the Swiss collection agency for the universal radio and television fee which may send you a mandatory invoice to pay. Please check if the number of months on the invoice corresponds to the number of months you stay in Switzerland.



Highly important

In case of an emergency, you need to call the relevant emergency phone number that can also be found on the back of all Swiss phone directories.

- Police 117
- Ambulance 144
- Fire department 118
- Poisonings 145

Coping strategies

The best strategy for coping with the various impacts of culture shock is to make a conscious effort to adjust to the new culture. Here are some suggestions on how to make yourself feel more at home in your new surroundings:

Admit frankly that these impacts exist.

Learn the rules of living in your host country. Try to understand how and why the local people act the way they do. Their behaviour and customs may be different from your own.

Get involved in some sports and cultural activities.

Take time to learn the language. It always helps to understand as much as possible what people are saying. They will appreciate your effort to communicate with them in their language, even if it is just a few simple sentences, and it will make your daily life much easier. **Take part in a French course for exchange students offered in Sion.**

Travel. Take the time to be a tourist and explore the country’s sights.

Do not hesitate to contact the Academic Services for individual support.

Preparing your stay in Switzerland

I. Before your arrival

i. Arrange your visa on time

Certain **non-European students need to apply for a visa** at the nearest Swiss Embassy at least **three months prior to departure**. A so-called “tourist visa” is not sufficient and cannot be changed to a “student visa” once you have arrived in Switzerland.

Information on type of visa required

If you need a visa, please call the Swiss embassy in your country for your own visa application

Students who need to apply for a visa will receive an invitation letter from our school. Please provide all necessary documents to the Swiss embassy in your country.

Please keep us informed about the progress of your visa application and let us know immediately once your visa has been granted.

DO NOT book your flight before you receive your visa.

The procedure might take up to three months. ii. Requested documents



Schengen VISA

During your stay in Switzerland, you may wish to travel to neighbouring countries. If your country does not have bilateral agreements to let you travel to neighbouring countries of Switzerland without a visa, there is a collective visa option called Schengen Visa. This visa will enable you to travel to Schengen member countries without any problems. Apply for this visa at one of the Schengen countries' embassies in your own country; you may not get it once you are in Switzerland!

The Schengen Space is the territory constituted by the countries that have signed and implemented the Schengen Agreement: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Poland, and Portugal. The agreement allows free circulation of people within the territory of the member countries.

ii. Requested documents

The Academic Services will let you know via email when it is time for you to register.

All documents must be sent back to sacad@hevs.ch

a) Registration on MoveON

All incoming students have to register on a web-based system called “MoveON”.

b) Learning Agreement: goals of your course / traineeship

The first part of the learning agreement needs to be completed before the start of your course or traineeship.

In case your study plan changes after you have arrived in Switzerland, fill in the second part no later than two weeks after the beginning of your course.



Attendance and participation in activities scheduled in the study plan/learning agreement are mandatory. Absent students need to inform the professors in writing, who will decide if the absence is justified or not and if a penalty applies. This rule also applies to the French language courses in Sion.

c) Insurance Documents

HEALTH & ACCIDENT INSURANCE

- **EUROPEAN HEALTH INSURANCE CARD**
EU exchange students can present the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) as proof of insurance coverage. Please make sure that your EHIC card is valid for the entire duration of your stay in Switzerland.



Please send a double-sided copy of your EHIC card to the Academic Services prior to arrival.

- **OTHER INSURANCE CARDS**
The Municipality will decide if your insurance is valid in Switzerland. If it is not recognised, your insurance in your home country needs to sign the “Check Form for the Equivalent of Swiss Health Insurance” (form transmitted by the Municipality).

You can also contract a “Swisscare” insurance for only CHF 65.00 per month.

INSURANCE DECLARATION

The Academic Services will send you an insurance declaration to fill in.

The HES-SO Valais-Wallis only covers accident insurance and personal liability insurance for traineeships at the Institutes.



According to Swiss law, health and accident insurance is compulsory for all students. Health care is very expensive in Switzerland. Swiss health insurance does not cover dentist bills. Ask for an estimate before any treatment.

d) Proof of sufficient funds

Please make sure:

- That you have sufficient funds to support yourself
- That you have enough Swiss francs in cash to cover your expenses for the first few weeks in Switzerland (approx. CHF 1,000.00)

Please send us proof of sufficient funds (payslip, letter from your parents, ...)

Cost of living (approx.)

Accommodation	CHF 500.00 to 600.00 / month
Food and other expenses	CHF 400.00 / month
Residence permit	CHF 95.00 – 150.00
Transport (Half-Fare travelcard)	CHF 185.00

iii. Arrange your accommodation

The HES-SO Valais-Wallis has no residential campus. Exchange students usually rent a room in a private home, student housing or organise a flatshare. Prices range from CHF 500.00 to 600.00 per month for a single, furnished room (kitchen and bathroom facilities are often shared) or a studio.



[Ads for accommodation in Sion and Sierre submitted by students](#)

[Ads for accommodation in Sion \(immoscout24\)](#)

[Student houses in Sierre](#)

[Ads for accommodation in Sierre \(immoscout24\)](#)

[Free advertising website](#)

[Rooms in Sion](#)

a) Liability and household insurances:

EU exchange students must provide a copy of their third-party liability and household insurances for the entire duration of their stay to our International Office prior to arrival.

The HES-SO Valais-Wallis will take out liability and household insurances for non-EU exchange students or students who do not have these insurance coverages.



Liability insurance is any type of insurance policy that protects an individual or business from the risk that they may be sued and held legally liable for something such as malpractice, injury or negligence.

iv. Laptop configuration requirements

Laptops are compulsory for all degree programmes except Physiotherapy.

http://sinf.hevs.ch/Portals/8/OrdinateurPortableEtudiant_V12_0_F.pdf

The requirements are as follows:

Bureautique	Développement
Intel i5 ou supérieur (Pas d'ARM) 8 GB RAM Disque dur 256GB Carte réseau sans fil 802.11 ac ou a/b/g/n 1x USB 1x USB-C Windows 10 64 bits	Intel i5 ou supérieur (Pas d'ARM) Architecture Intel VT-xS 16 GB RAM Disque dur 512GB Carte réseau sans fil 802.11 ac ou a/b/g/n 1x USB 1x USB-C Windows 10 64 bits

V. Travel to Switzerland

Switzerland has two international airports, one in Geneva and one in Zurich. Both airports have direct train connections to Sion or Sierre. Further information on train schedules can be found [here](#).

- If you have a late incoming flight, please make sure there are still trains running to Sion or Sierre.
- Some destinations such as Sierre are not always indicated on the platform information screen, but most trains do stop in Sierre. To be sure, please check with the ticket controller on the train or download the “SBB mobile” app.

With the [Half-Fare travelcard](#), you can travel for half price on all SBB routes. We recommend you purchase it upon your arrival at the airport to benefit directly from the cheaper price. We advise you not to buy it online.

If you arrive after office hours, on a weekend or on a public holiday, you might need to take a taxi to your accommodation.

a) Public Transport

1. Trains - SBB/CFF

Tickets need to be bought before boarding the train and are systematically checked. They are available from the railway station (ticket counters and machines) and online.

Tickets for cable cars, ski lifts, etc. need to be purchased separately (not included in travelpasses etc.).



[SBB website](#)

[Supersaver ticket](#)

Would you like to travel through Switzerland at the lowest fares? Then simply look out for supersaver tickets when purchasing online and via mobile. Supersaver ticket (<https://www.sbb.ch/en/travelcards-and-tickets/tickets-for-switzerland/supersaver-tickets.html>)

[Half-Fare travelcard](#)

With the Half-Fare travelcard, you travel for half price on trains, most boats, buses and trams. It can be purchased for CHF 185.00 (CHF 120.00 if you are under 25) at Swiss railway stations and is valid for one year. You will need a photo and your

passport or ID card.

Automatic renewal: When buying a Half-Fare travelcard, you take out an indefinite contract, which means that your travelcard will be automatically renewed upon expiry. When buying the travelcard, inform the sales staff that you are an exchange student and ask them to cancel the automatic renewal.



[Half-fare travelcard](#)

Seven25

Are you under 25 and happy to travel in the evenings? Then Seven25 is ideal for you. Seven25 entitles passengers under 25 to take any 2nd class journey on the entire SBB network and with numerous private transport companies between 7 pm and 5 am for free.

It is not automatically renewed.

You can order it online or at the counter.



[Seven25](#)

Point-to-point travelcard

If you regularly make the same train journey, you might want to buy a point-to-point travelcard. Prices depend on the period of validity and the length of the journey. The travel pass can be bought online or at any railway station.



[Point-to-point travelcard](#)

One-day travelpass

The 1-day travelpass is valid on most of the railway network. Holders of the Half-Fare travelcard can purchase the 1-day travelpass for the price of CHF 75.00.

1-day travelpasses can also be bought from Sion and Sierre municipalities at a cheaper price: CHF 42.00 in Sion and CHF 44.00 in Sierre.



[Sierre Municipality](#)

[Sion Municipality](#)

Swiss Travel Pass

The Swiss Travel Pass is an all-in-one ticket to travel by rail, road and waterway throughout the whole of Switzerland (validity: 3, 4, 8 or 15 consecutive days).



[Swiss Travel Pass](#)

2. Boats

Switzerland has several large lakes and it is possible to cruise on them, either to enjoy the ride or as a means of transport.

The CGN boat company offers boat trips across Lake Geneva, the largest lake in Europe, and connects France and Switzerland.

The ZSG boat company operates boat trips on Lake Zurich.

The BLS operates boats across Lake Thun and Lake Brienz.



[Lake Geneva - CGN](#)

[Lake Zurich - ZSG](#)

[Lake Thun and Brienz - BLS](#)

II. After your arrival

I. Welcome day or individual appointment

You are going to have an appointment with the Academic Services. We will give you all the documents you need for the registration office and the bank.

II. Register at the residents' registration office



DO NOT travel outside of Switzerland until you have received your residence permit. You could be refused entry back into Switzerland.

You must register at the residents' registration office of your place of residence within 10 days of your arrival. Register as quickly as possible.

a) Necessary documents to bring with you

The Academic Services is going to prepare your file, but you must bring with you:

- 2 passport-sized photos (for European students)
- Rent agreement

b) Opening hours



[Registration office of Sierre](#)

[Registration office of Sion](#)

III. Open a bank account

Open a bank account at UBS as soon as possible.

You will need to bring an enrolment certificate (“Attestation HES-SO Valais-Wallis”) and your ID.

Please notify the Academic Services as soon as you receive your bank account information.

You will receive your ATM card by post within a few days.

PREPARING YOUR DEPARTURE FROM SWITZERLAND

I. Before your departure

i. Fill in the final documents

Before your departure you will be sent documents to complete:

I. Final report: information / your opinion on your mobility (only for European students)

II. Evaluation of stay: your opinion of the HES-SO Valais-Wallis

Please send the duly completed documents to sacad@hevs.ch before you leave.

II. Announce your departure

ONLY FOR NON-EUROPEAN STUDENTS

You need to announce your departure from Switzerland at the resident's registration office in person.

III. Arrange a check-out date and time

Let your landlord know when you are leaving and arrange a time to return your key, etc.

IV. Donate

Anything that you do not want to take home with you (cutlery, clothes, etc.) can be given to charity.

Communauté Emmaüs, Route de Riddes 51, 1950 Sion [Emmaüs – Sion](#)

Caritas Valais, Rue de Loèche 19, 1950 Sion [Caritas - clothes – Sion](#)

Hiob International, Cour de la gare 21, 1951 Sion [Aid and Relief Organisation](#)

II. After your departure

i. Close your Swiss bank account

Please close your bank account after having received your last salary (end of the month) or/and your last part of the grant.

You can close it online, after your departure, with your ebanking access.

ii. Your transcript of records

As soon as we receive your grades, we will forward them to you and your school.

iii. Send us a postcard

We would be very happy if you sent us a postcard from your country to decorate our office!

CHECKLIST

Before my arrival

- ☐ I received my invitation letter (only if a visa is needed)
- ☐ I have my visa (only for overseas students)
- ☐ I registered on the “MoveON” database and sent the PDF file to the Academic Services I filled in the learning agreement
- ☐ I filled in the insurance declaration
- ☐ My computer fulfils the HES-SO Valais-Wallis requirements
- ☐ I have provided a copy of the European Health Insurance Card (if applicable)
- ☐ I have a medical and third party liability insurance policy (translated into English) valid in Switzerland for the duration of my stay (if I haven’t a European Health Insurance Card)
- ☐ I have my personal identification documents (ID or passport) and a copy of them with me
- ☐ I have one/two passport-sized photos (for European students)
- ☐ I have sent the proof of sufficient funds to cover my stay in Switzerland (letter from parents)
- ☐ I have a sufficient amount of Swiss francs in cash (approx. CHF 1,000.00) to cover my expenses during the first weeks
- ☐ I have found accommodation in Switzerland

After my arrival

- ☐ I gave the Academic Services the phone number I will be using during my stay in Switzerland
- ☐ I registered at the residents’ registration office of my municipality
- ☐ I opened a UBS bank account, filled in the grant agreement and forwarded the IBAN to the Academic Services
- ☐ I received my residence permit by post

Before my departure

- ☐ I completed the final report
- ☐ I completed the evaluation of stay
- ☐ I closed my Swiss bank account
- ☐ I told my landlord when I am leaving
- ☐ I paid my invoices
- ☐ I donated things I will not need any more

After my departure

- ☐ I received my transcript of records from the HES-SO Valais-Wallis
- ☐ I sent a postcard to the Academic Services



hes.
so
you.

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