



# **Studying in Germany** A Practical Guide for International Students

6th Edition



**DAAD**

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

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International Students

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The DAAD strives to use language which applies equally to women and men.  
In this publication, however, the use of gender-equal forms was not always possible,  
as the explicit mention of both forms would have encumbered readability.

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Federal Foreign Office

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# Studying in Germany? A Good Idea!

So, you're interested in studying in Germany?  
That's fantastic! We're happy to hear that!

Studying abroad – especially in a country very different from your own – is an exciting challenge. You will be influenced by the surge of new impressions and points of view you encounter here. Studying in Germany – in the heart of Europe – will certainly have a long-lasting impact on your life.

There are diverse opportunities in Germany for learning and researching. German universities have an outstanding reputation throughout the world. Each year they produce significant, internationally recognised advances and innovations. Here you will find ideal conditions for gaining a successful university education. By the way, you are one of many talented, young individuals who wish to study in Germany. There are more than 320,000 young people from around the world studying and researching at German universities. At present, they comprise 11.9 percent of all students in Germany. In fact, there are very few countries that can boast a higher percentage of international students. And you are not alone as you travel to Germany. This brochure will help you prepare for your studies here. If you need

any additional information, feel free to contact the DAAD staff in your country and they will be happy to assist you. Or simply post your questions on [www.facebook.com/Study.in.Germany](https://www.facebook.com/Study.in.Germany).

We wish you success and a wonderful, unforgettable stay in Germany!

## Who are we?

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is a joint organisation of German institutions of higher education and student bodies. Our task is to support academic cooperation around the world, especially by promoting the exchange of students and academics.

You can find more information about studying and living in Germany in our info brochures and on our websites [www.daad.de](http://www.daad.de) and [www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de).





# 1.

## Preparing for your study visit

This chapter tells you how to plan a successful study visit and what you should take care of before you leave home.

Studying abroad is like turning over a new leaf in an unknown world. There are many things to consider, plan and organise. The following timeline will give you an overview of each step you will take on your way to Germany.

On the following pages you will find detailed information about each step on the timeline.

At the end of this chapter you will find a detailed checklist to ensure that you have completed all of the important steps and obtained all the necessary documents for your trip to Germany (see pp. 42–43).



## Timeline

### ► About 15 months before your planned trip to Germany

- Start gathering information about study opportunities in Germany either online or from a DAAD office (see pp. 10–18).
- Find out whether you fulfil the requirements for studying in Germany (see pp. 19–23).
  - Is your school-leaving certificate sufficient?
  - Will you have to take a language test?
- Determine how you will finance your study visit in Germany and whether you are eligible for a scholarship (see pp. 24–29).

### ► About nine months before your trip

- Decide on a degree programme and university (see pp. 10–18).
- Contact the International Office at the university of your choice (see pp. 16–17).

### ► About four to five months before your studies begin

- Prepare and submit your application of admission (see pp. 30–35). Note the submission deadlines!
- Would you like to live in a student hall of residence? Then apply for a room now (see p. 40).

### ► When you receive your notification of acceptance

- Do you need a visa? If so, then apply for one now (see pp. 36–38).
- Do you have a health insurance policy which is recognised in Germany? Then request a statement confirming your coverage from your provider now. For more information on health insurance, see p. 26.

### ► About one month before your trip

- Make sure you have collected all the necessary documents (see p. 43).
- Plan where you will spend your first nights in Germany (see p. 41).

### ► Your trip to Germany!

# 1.1

## Selecting your degree programme and university

This section provides you with an overview of the German university system and the degree programmes you can choose from.

The more choices you have, the harder it is to choose. This especially applies to your situation, as there are so many opportunities to study in Germany.

There are 426 officially recognised institutions of higher education in around 170 towns and cities throughout Germany. The map on page 18 shows the location of these institutions. In total, German universities and colleges offer over 18,650 degree programmes. And from all of these, you will have to choose one. Here we've put together some information to help with your decision.

### What kind of colleges and universities are there?

Deciding on a college or university is somewhat easier as there are only three types to choose from in Germany:

- Universities
- Universities of applied sciences
- Colleges of art, film and music

Studying at a **university** is a good idea if you are interested in a scientifically-oriented education. Universities offer a broad range of courses and subjects. Some schools specialise in certain disciplines, such as advanced technology, medicine and education. If you would like to enter a doctoral programme in Germany, then a university is the perfect place for you.

**Universities of applied sciences** are ideal if you are looking for a more practice-oriented education. These institutions provide students with a scientifically based education, tailored to the demands of professional life. The degree programmes generally include internships (see p. 71)



## A perfect match!

*I was thrilled when I stumbled across a degree programme in „Cognitive Science“ while looking for Computer Science programmes online. This bachelor's degree programme, offered in Osnabrück and Tübingen, offers a combination of Computer Science, Psychology and Biology. It was perfect for me!*

*What I especially like is that they give you a lot of freedom to design your programme according to your interests. And the students are very, very motivated.*

**Alona Sakhnenko** comes from Ukraine where she studied Applied Mathematics. She is now completing bachelor's programmes in Cognitive Science and Computer Science at the University of Osnabrück.

and a practical module. This enables students to apply their knowledge on the job at companies and businesses.

If you wish to study an artistic or design-oriented subject, you may be the perfect candidate for a **college of art, film or music**. There you will find courses in the Fine Arts, Industrial and Fashion Design, Graphic Arts, Instrumental Music, Performing Arts, Voice, etc. Colleges of modern media train students to become directors, camera operators, screenwriters, technicians and producers for film and television. Potential candidates must possess a high degree of artistic talent which they are asked to demonstrate in an aptitude test. Therefore, you can expect special admission requirements if you wish to apply to a college of art, film or music.

## Facts and figures

A total of more than 2.75 million students were enrolled at 426 officially recognised universities and colleges in the winter semester 2015/2016.

- 1,756,452 students at 129 universities,
- 929,241 students at 215 universities of applied sciences
- 35,536 students at 52 colleges of art, film and music

Source: Federal Statistical Office

### What is the difference between public and private universities?

Most universities and colleges in Germany are public, i. e. they receive funding from the federal government. Some are also financed by the Protestant or Catholic Church. In addition to these subsidised institutions, there are almost 120 private universities and colleges which confer officially recognised degrees. The majority of these are universities of applied sciences.

Most students in Germany are enrolled at public universities. Only 7.1 percent of all students attend a private institution, which, among other reasons, is due to the fact that private colleges and universities tend to charge high tuition fees (see p. 27). The quality of instruction at both types of universities, however, is comparably high.

#### Did you know ...

University education in Germany is not centrally coordinated. Each of the 16 states (see p. 18) has its own higher education laws and guidelines. German universities are largely self-regulatory, which means that not all rules apply to every university. Therefore, always enquire about the particular regulations at the university of your choice.

### What kind of degree programmes are there?

Each course prepares you for a particular university degree. When you choose a degree programme, you're not only choosing a subject, but also the degree you wish to ultimately attain.

German universities offer a wide range of degree programmes to suit your needs and educational level.

- You can attend university in Germany as a beginner (undergraduate studies).
- You can gain international experience at a German university for a couple of semesters to supplement your degree programme at home.
- You can enter a postgraduate programme in Germany, if you have already completed your undergraduate studies.
- You can study as a doctoral candidate.

### Degrees conferred by German universities

You can attain the following degrees at German universities:

**Bachelor's degree** (B.A., B.Sc., Bachelor of Engineering, etc.): This is the first-level academic degree recognised on the international job market. Bachelor's degree programmes teach students the fundamentals of their subject of study in six to eight semesters. Once you have received your bachelor's degree, you can enter professional life or continue studying for the second-level academic qualification – the master's degree.

**Master's degree** (M.A., M.Sc., Master of Engineering, etc.): This is the second-level academic qualification you can receive from a German university. If you wish to enter a master's degree programme, you are required to have a bachelor's degree (or equivalent academic qualification). Master's degree programmes last two to four semesters and allow you to deepen and expand your knowledge in a certain subject. After you receive your master's degree, you can enter professional life or continue studying for the next academic qualification – the doctoral degree.

**State examination** (Staatsexamen): The state examination is not an academic degree, but rather a state qualification. This means that the examination regulations are stipulated by the German states, not by the university. Another difference is that the examinations are administered by state invigilators. Those who wish to work as a medical doctor, lawyer, pharmacist or teacher in Germany have to pass a state examination. Students are permitted to take the first state examination after successfully completing their studies in Medicine, Law, Pharmaceuticals or Teacher Education. Afterwards, they can begin a professionally oriented, practical training phase to prepare themselves for the second state examination and / or enter a doctoral programme. Passing the state examination, however, does not guarantee the candidate a job. If you wish to attain this qualification, you should enquire whether the German state examination is recognised in your home country.

**Doctoral degree:** A doctoral programme, which involves the completion of a research paper (dissertation), concludes with the conferral of a doctoral degree. The duration of doctoral programmes depends on the candidate's particular area of research. However, most programmes generally take two to five years to complete (see p. 14).

In recent decades the academic programmes at German universities have undergone major reform as mandated by the Bologna Process. Meanwhile, the new bachelor's and master's degree programmes have all but replaced the traditional German *Diplom* and *Magister Artium* programmes at most universities.

As you look into more universities and their programmes, you may still encounter these types of degrees. A **Diplom** is generally conferred to students who study the Natural Sciences, Engineering, Economics and Social Sciences, while students in the humanities are awarded the **Magister Artium (M.A.)** degree. Both degrees are comparable to a master's degree.



## Doctoral degrees

There are many opportunities for you to attain a doctorate from a German university.

Basically, you can take two routes – either research independently and write a dissertation under professorial supervision, or enter a doctoral programme that provides a fixed structure.

Option 1: You first have to find a university professor (*Doktorvater* or *Doktormutter*) to supervise your dissertation. Since instructors are not obliged to take on every candidate, your research idea must be compelling. Find out in advance which university and professor would be best suited for your research project. For more information, visit the HRK website [www.higher-education-compass.de](http://www.higher-education-compass.de) and the DAAD's Research Explorer at [www.daad.de/research-explorer](http://www.daad.de/research-explorer).

Option 2: You can enter a structured doctoral degree programme in Germany. The most significant of these include:

- Research training groups
- Graduate schools
- International doctoral programmes

**Research training groups** are university programmes that promote young scientists and researchers. These training groups allow doctoral candidates to embed their dissertation in a comprehensive research programme. Such programmes are generally interdisciplinary and are supervised by several scientists. Visit the webpage of the German Research Foundation (DFG) for a list of the research training groups which it is currently funding: [www.dfg.de/gk](http://www.dfg.de/gk).

Some states in Germany have set up **graduate schools** where most of the courses are taught in English. In contrast to research training groups, graduate schools are permanent fixtures at their universities. This is where young, highly qualified researchers can receive intensive and individual advising.

There are also a wide range of **international doctoral programmes** (see p. 15). For more information about all of these international structured doctoral programmes, visit [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes).

Please note: The information in this brochure – especially pertaining to the admission requirements and the structure of the academic programmes – primarily applies to the bachelor's and master's degree programmes. If you are interested in entering a doctoral programme, you can find more relevant information at [www.research-in-germany.de/phd](http://www.research-in-germany.de/phd). Our "PhDGermany" database ([www.phdgermany.de](http://www.phdgermany.de)) contains an extensive collection of doctoral positions especially suited to international candidates. Once you have found a position that interests you, you can apply directly via the DAAD portal by clicking the link provided in the job offer.





## International degree programmes

German universities currently offer around 1,420 internationally-oriented degree programmes. These well-structured, high-level **“International Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Programmes”** feature intensive student counselling and academic advising. Most courses are taught in English, though German language courses often supplement the programmes.

### More information?

[www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes)

### Self-assessment tests

If you're having a hard time deciding on a major, you might want to take the “Study Interest Test”, or SIT, for short. The test is free and only takes 15 minutes ([www.hochschulkompass.de/studium-interessentest.html](http://www.hochschulkompass.de/studium-interessentest.html)). For more links to other self-tests, visit <http://www.inobis.de/what-to-study.html> („Self-tests“) and <https://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/degree-programmes/choosing-a-programme/higher-education-orientation-tests.html>

If you're interested in technical subjects, the consultation service “Self Assessment international” is right for you. Visit the service at [www.selfassessment.tu9.de](http://www.selfassessment.tu9.de).

If you'd like to find out whether you can meet the demands at German universities, the TestAS will help assess your ability (see p. 21).

**Double degree programmes** have an international or bilateral orientation. They are usually offered by a German university in cooperation with one or more partner universities abroad. Students who participate in such degree programmes usually study at the partner university for several semesters. Students receive full credit for completing pre-approved courses from their university at home. Some of these degree programmes require students to spend approximately half their time at the partner university. When completed, students receive a double degree – one from each university.

There are also a number of programmes especially tailored to the needs of international doctoral candidates. The most prominent of these include the **Graduate Schools in the Excellence Initiative** and the **International Max Planck Research Schools (IMPRS)**. They offer especially talented German and international graduates the opportunity to pursue their doctorate at some of the most excellent scientific centres in Germany. In addition to intensive expert advising, most of these programmes feature English-language courses and, in many cases, special funding opportunities.

### More information?

[www.exzellenz-initiative.de](http://www.exzellenz-initiative.de)  
[www.mpg.de/de/imprs](http://www.mpg.de/de/imprs)



## What is the right degree programme for me?

Now you have a general idea of the opportunities offered by German universities. It's up to you to find out which degree programme best suits your needs.

As you look for a suitable degree programme, we recommend using the search engine on **www.study-in.de**. It offers extensive information about all programmes currently offered at state-recognised universities in Germany. You will also find important information provided by the HRK database on admission requirements, application deadlines and contact addresses.

We also recommend visiting **www.universityranking.de**. This site evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of degree programmes at some 310 German universities in 39 popular subjects.

For more on international bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes, see **www.daad.de/international-programmes**.

For more information about universities and degree programmes, visit **www.study-in.de**, **www.studienwahl.de** and **www.inobis.de**.

## Where can I get academic advice?

Get as much advice as you can! There are also academic consulting and advising services in your home country to help you plan your study visit in Germany. If you need advice, please contact the following people or agencies:

- The **DAAD-Information Centres (ICs)** and the **DAAD branch offices** (for addresses, see pp. 82–87)
- DAAD-affiliated **instructors** and **lecturers** at foreign universities
- **Goethe-Institut** or **Goethe-Zentrum**
- The **German diplomatic missions** – i. e. embassies and consulates

## The academic year in Germany

The academic year is divided into two semesters at German universities – winter and summer semester.

The “lecture-free” period – or semester break – designates the months when no lectures or seminars are given. The semester schedule varies depending on the type of university you attend. Therefore, enquire about the exact dates at the university of your choice.

**Semester schedule** at most universities:

### Universities

Winter semester: October to March  
Summer semester: April to September

### Universities of applied sciences

Winter semester: September to February  
Summer semester: March to August

Important: Some degree programmes only begin in the winter semester



## *You're the focus ...*

*in everything we do! At the University of Bremen you can design the programmes for international students. We at the International Office welcome your ideas and involvement. We are happy to help you integrate your strengths in developing a multifaceted programme for international students. In addition to orientation events at the beginning of the semester, we also provide concrete academic assistance, such as thesis-writing workshops and a learning tandem programme. We also invite students from around the world to get together and participate in recreational activities. Perhaps you have some other ideas about how we can network the numerous cultures on our campus!*

**Dr. Annette Lang** is the director of the International Office at the University of Bremen.

Your most important contact in Germany is the **International Office** (*Akademisches Auslandsamt*) at the university of your choice (for a list of addresses, visit [www.daad.de/aaa](http://www.daad.de/aaa)). The International Office provides information about study opportunities in specific disciplines and degree programmes, admission requirements, study preparation, languages tests, internships, financial aid and assistance with planning your studies.

And, of course, our staff at the **DAAD head office** in Bonn are happy to answer your questions regarding your study visit in Germany (for contact info, see p. 82). You can also post your questions on [www.facebook.com/Study.in.Germany](https://www.facebook.com/Study.in.Germany).

Remember, you are not alone. We're here to help you!

Universities in Germany



## 1.2

# Meeting the admission requirements

In this section we outline the requirements you must fulfil before you can be admitted to a German university. In particular, these requirements concern your school-leaving certificate, your prior knowledge of the subject you intend to study and your German language skills.

Those who wish to study at a German university require a *Hochschulzugangsberechtigung* or **higher education entrance qualification**. Although the term is daunting, the idea behind it is simple – it is a school-leaving certificate confirming that you are qualified to begin your university studies. In Germany, after students graduate from secondary school, they receive a general university entrance qualification (*Abitur*) or qualification for a university of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulreife*).

### Will they recognise my higher education entrance qualification?

How can you determine whether your higher education entrance qualification will be recognised in Germany? A good place to start is the DAAD online admission database at [www.daad.de/admission](http://www.daad.de/admission). Simply enter the country where you received your school-leaving certificate.

The database will then inform you whether your certificate:

- is recognised as a qualification for direct university admission,
- is only recognised as a qualification for subject-restricted study (i. e. only for admission to a certain range of subjects),
- is only recognised in combination with proof you have successfully completed one or two academic years in your home country, or
- is not recognised as a higher education entrance qualification.

Your school-leaving certificate is usually recognised as a university entrance qualification in Germany if you come from an EU country, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway or Switzerland and your certificate is also recognised as a university entrance qualification there. This also applies to those who have received their *Abitur* from any of the 140 German Schools abroad.



## A wonderful time!

*I spent one year in a foundation course preparing for my bachelor's degree programme - with students from all around the world who were also new to Germany. It was super exciting!*

*My language skills were actually pretty good when I arrived in Germany. But during the foundation course, I was able to really improve my speaking ability - and acquire a lot of subject-related knowledge. After I completed the course, it was great for me to see that I had reached the same level as the native speakers in my degree programme.*

**Ana Cristina Arango** comes from Colombia. She is pursuing her bachelor's degree in General and Comparative Literature and Romance Studies at the Goethe University Frankfurt.

The DAAD online admission database only provides a general overview. The database at <http://anabin.kmk.org> can give you detailed information with a more extensive list of countries and school-leaving certificates (select “*Schulabschlüsse mit Hochschulzugang*” – “*Suchen*”, German only).

In some cases, especially gifted applicants may be admitted into artistic degree programmes without a higher education entrance qualification. Depending on the university, candidates must either submit a work portfolio or pass an aptitude test.

Ultimately, the university you apply to always has the final say concerning your admission. Therefore, before submitting your application, be sure to enquire at the International Office at the university of

your choice about specific requirements and whether you meet the prerequisites for admission.

## What if my school-leaving certificate is not sufficient?

If your school-leaving certificate is not sufficient for university admission, you will have to take a qualification assessment examination in Germany, called a **Feststellungsprüfung**.

You can prepare for this examination in a **foundation course** (*Studienkolleg*) in Germany. These are special programmes offered at universities and universities of applied sciences. They include modules with a focus on certain subjects.

The examination assesses a student's proficiency in several subjects that are crucial to the degree programme. One component of the qualification assessment examination is a language test. However, students must have some basic German language skills to even participate in a foundation course – approximately the B1 level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (see infobox on p. 23). In the examination, you must demonstrate that you possess the language skills necessary for your intended course of study.

Subject-specific foundation courses usually take two semesters to complete. Students who demonstrate above-average achievement may be permitted to take the qualification assessment examination after only one semester. Foundation courses provide about 32 hours of instruction per week.

Participation is usually free of charge at public universities in Germany. However, like normal students, foundation course participants are also required to pay the **semester contribution** (see pp. 24–25). If you wish to attend a foundation course, you must apply in advance.

### More information?

[www.studienkollegs.de](http://www.studienkollegs.de)

### What are the demands of university study?

You might fulfil the formal prerequisites for admission, but can you meet the demands of university study in Germany? If this is something you are concerned about, there

is help available – the Test for Academic Studies and / or propaedeutic courses.

With the **Test for Academic Studies (TestAS)**, you can assess your ability to cope with the demands that German universities place on their students. The result could also help you narrow down your choices for a degree programme. After taking the test, you will be able to more realistically assess the likelihood of completing a degree programme at a German university. Furthermore, passing the TestAS significantly increases your chances of gaining admission to the university of your choice. Please find out whether your university requires the TestAS and what advantages it has for you. The TestAS is administered several times a year at TestDaF testing centres around the world and possibly in your country as well. For a list of testing centres and information about TestAS examination fees, visit **[www.testas.de](http://www.testas.de)**.

**Propaedeutic courses** are another way to prepare for the demands of university study. These university preparatory courses are offered to international applicants by some universities. They provide students the language and academic skills they

### Prerequisite: Internship

For some degree programmes – primarily at universities of applied sciences – internships are a prerequisite for university admission. Therefore, enquire at the university of your choice whether an internship is obligatory for admission to your degree programme.



require for studying in Germany. They often include an introduction to the German university system and scientific working methods.

These courses are usually aimed at applicants who have a recognised higher education entrance qualification, but wish to prepare themselves for the degree programme. A preparatory semester can help them complete their degree programme in a successful and timely manner. The International Office at the university of your choice can tell you whether such prepaedetic courses are available. For a general overview, visit the DAAD database at [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes) (select “Prep Course” in the section “Degree / Level”).



### How good does my German have to be?

For most degree programmes, the language of instruction at German universities is German. Therefore, you will have to prove you have adequate knowledge of German to be admitted to the university.

The exception to the rule applies to students who participate in international degree programmes (see p. 15) and special postgraduate programmes.

Some universities do not require applicants to prove their German language skills, if they only intend to study there for one or two semesters. However, this rule does not apply everywhere. Therefore, enquire about the specific admission requirement regarding language ability at the university of your choice.

### Language certificate

At [www.sprachnachweis.de](http://www.sprachnachweis.de), you can find out the German proficiency level required for your degree programme at the university of your choice. The website also offers a helpful overview of the tests that you can take to prove your German language skills.

The language proficiency required for university admission can be certified by two different tests – the DSH Test (*“Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang”*) and the “TestDaF” (*Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache*).

You are not required to take **either of these tests**, if one of the following cases applies to you:

- You have received an Abitur from a German-language school.
- You have received the “Goethe Zertifikat C2: Major German Language Certificate” or the “*telc Deutsch C1 Hochschule*” examination.
- You have received the German Language Diploma (Level II) from the German Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Culture.

You can take the **German as a Foreign Language Test (TestDaF)** in your home country even before you arrive in Germany. The test is administered in Germany and almost 100 other countries around the world six times a year, and in the People’s Republic of China, three times a year. Visit [www.testdaf.de](http://www.testdaf.de) for information about testing centres, dates, fees, application procedures and much more.



The **DSH Test** (*“Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang”*) can only be taken in Germany. Many universities offer this examination. Enquire at the International Office at your university for the upcoming testing dates.

The TestDaF and DSH assess several levels of language proficiency. Those who pass all the sections of the tests at the intermediate level (TDN 4 for the TestDaF, or the DSH-2 for the DSH) are eligible for unrestricted admission to university. Depending on the specific regulations at your university, a lower mark in one of the sections will not necessarily disqualify you from regular admission. You are required to pay an examination fee if you wish to take the DSH or TestDaF. The cost of the fee depends on the administering authority and the country in which you take the test.

Of course, learning German is not only important for gaining admission to university. Keep in mind that your German language skills will significantly determine how comfortable you feel in Germany and how easily you make German friends (see pp. 64–66).

### The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Language skill levels in Germany correspond to the three level groups as defined by the CEFR: Basic User (A), Independent User (B) and Proficient User (C). These are divided into six subgroups which range from absolute beginners (A1) to almost native speakers (C2).

#### More information?

[www.europaeischer-referenzrahmen.de](http://www.europaeischer-referenzrahmen.de)

# 1.3

## Planning your finances

In this section we outline the expenses you can expect during your study visit and the funding possibilities that are available to you.

Your financial resources are an important aspect of your plans. Before you leave your home country, you must secure sufficient funds to finance your stay.

### What expenses will I have?

Be prepared to pay for the following expenses during your stay in Germany:

- Semester contribution
- Basic living expenses (rent, food, clothing, books, telephone, etc.)
- Health insurance coverage
- Tuition fees (if applicable)

### Semester contribution

All university students are required to pay a semester contribution, the amount of which can vary depending on the services it includes. The contribution costs around 270 euros on average.

One part of the semester contribution covers social services. This helps finance, for example, the student dining halls, student halls of residence, athletic facilities and administrative services.

In some states students are charged an administrative fee which can range from 50 to 75 euros a semester.

The semester contribution at many universities also includes the cost of a public transportation ticket. This **semester ticket** allows you to use public transportation in and around your university town for six months free of charge. Depending on the

Example: Semester contribution at the Freie Universität Berlin	
Winter semester 2016/17	
Enrolment fee	€ 50.00
Social contribution	€ 51.69
Student union contribution	€ 8.70
Semester ticket	€ 193.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 304.29</b>

city and the range of the ticket, you can expect to pay between 25 and 160 euros per semester for the ticket.



## Living expenses

Compared to other European countries, Germany is not overly expensive. The price for food, accommodation, clothing, cultural activities, etc. are approximately equivalent to the EU average. In fact, the approximate cost of living is relatively low compared to that of Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries.

It is difficult to say exactly how much money a student in Germany needs per month. The cost of living varies from city to city. Generally students can live on less money in smaller cities than in large cities. Of course the amount of money you will need greatly depends on how economically you live.

Students in Germany require an average of 900 euros per month to cover their living expenses. Those who have inexpensive accommodation and live modestly can probably get by on about 700 euros per month.

**Renting a flat** comprises the largest portion of one's monthly expenditures. However, the rental prices in Germany vary greatly. Depending on the city in which you live, you will likely pay between 210 and 360 euros per month for accommodation. The rental prices are comparatively higher in cities like Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Bonn, Hamburg and Cologne. If you are looking to live cheaply, it might be a good idea to take a room in

a student hall of residence or a shared flat (see pp. 40–41).

Students are eligible for numerous **price concessions**. Theatres, opera houses, cinemas, museums and other cultural venues frequently offer concession rates to students who show their student ID at the ticket counter.

## How much does it cost?

average

### Supermarket:

1 kg potatoes	€ 0.75
1 kg rice	€ 2.40
500 g spaghetti	€ 0.50
1 loaf of bread (ca. 500 g)	€ 2.00
1 l of milk	€ 0.70
1 bottle of mineral water (1 l)	€ 0.50
1 frozen pizza	€ 1.80

### Café or restaurant:

1 cup of coffee or tea	€ 2.50
1 glass of cola (0.3 l)	€ 2.20
1 glass of beer (0.3 l)	€ 2.40
1 glass of wine (0.2 l)	€ 4.00
1 pizza / pasta dish	€ 7.00
1 small salad	€ 3.20

### Student dining hall:

1 lunch	€ 3.00
100 g salad from buffet	€ 0.65

### Admission prices:

Cinema	€ 8.00
Theatre	€ 15.00
Museum	€ 6.00
Swimming pool	€ 4.00



## Health insurance

Everyone who studies in Germany must have health insurance. When you officially enrol (see p. 52), you will be asked to show proof of health insurance coverage. You will also need confirmation of coverage to obtain a residence permit (see p. 54).

It is possible that your health insurance policy at home is also valid in Germany. This is usually the case for public health insurance policies in EU member states, as well as Bosnia, Herzegovina, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Morocco, Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Tunisia and Turkey. Germany has signed social insurance agreements with these countries to ensure cross-border coverage. With your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), you are also insured in Germany. In some circumstances, domestic and international health insurance policies from private foreign providers may also be recognised in Germany. Enquire at your health insurance provider for more information before coming to Germany. If your insurance policy from your home country is recognised (be it private or public), you will have to provide a statement at enrolment confirming that you are indeed exempt from mandatory German public health insurance coverage. To do this, visit the branch office of a German insurance provider before you enrol and request this statement confirming your present coverage. But remember, once your policy is recognised, you will not be able to switch to a public health insurance provider for the duration of your studies.

If your health insurance policy from home is not recognised in Germany, you are required to take out a policy in Germany. Public health insurance policies cost around 80 euros per month. However, if you are older than 30 or haven't completed your degree programme by your 14th semester, you are no longer eligible for the inexpensive student rate. Some public health insurance providers offer a less expensive interim rate for one semester (so-called "graduate student rate") before raising the premium to about 170 euros per month.

For students who are 30 or older, it might be less costly to take out a policy with a private health insurance provider. The Deutsches Studentenwerk has made an agreement with a provider for such cases. For more information, enquire at the *Studentenwerk* office at your university or visit [www.union-verdi.de/dsw-studenten-kv](http://www.union-verdi.de/dsw-studenten-kv).

Whatever the case, be sure to clarify your health insurance status before you come to Germany. In order to enrol (see p. 52), you have to provide proof of health insurance coverage to your university. Your health insurance provider at home and the International Office at your German university will be happy to help you. At many universities, the Studentenwerk offers service packages for international students which include accommodation, meal vouchers and a health insurance policy (see p. 45–47).

### Tuition fees

Most students in Germany are enrolled at publicly funded universities. These public institutions normally waive tuition fees for most bachelor's and many master's degree programmes. However, fees are charged for certain master's degree programmes – sometimes more than 10,000 euros per semester (1/2 year). Some private universities also charge relatively high tuition fees and in 2013, the state of Saxony began allowing public universities to charge international students from non-EU countries general tuition fees.

There are a few states in Germany which charge extra fees for those who commence a second degree programme or who study longer than the standard period of study. For more information, contact the International Office at the university of your choice.

The cost of tuition says nothing about the quality of education in Germany. Tuition-free degree programmes offer very high quality.

**More information?**  
[www.studis-online.de/StudInfo/Gebuehren](http://www.studis-online.de/StudInfo/Gebuehren)

Students' monthly expenses (not including tuition fees)		
	average	Example: Rent and utilities
Rent and utilities	€ 298.00	
Food and drink	€ 165.00	
Clothing	€ 52.00	
Learning materials	€ 30.00	
Car and public transportation	€ 82.00	
Health insurance, medical costs, medicine	€ 66.00	
Telephone, Internet, TV	€ 33.00	
Recreation, culture, sports	€ 68.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 794.00</b>	
		average
		Room in a student hall of residence
		€ 240.00
		Room in a shared flat
		€ 280.00
		Flat
		€ 357.00
		Source: Deutsches Studentenwerk, 20th Social Survey

### How can I prove that I can pay for my studies?

Before you begin your studies, you will have to show how you intend to finance your stay. You must provide what is called a **Finanzierungsnachweis** or “proof of financial resources”. In most cases, you are required to include this document with your visa application. At the latest, you will need it when you apply for a residence permit (see p. 54). At present, foreign students must prove they have about 8,820 euros per year at their disposal.

Proof of financial resources can be provided in various ways. As a rule, the following forms are accepted:

- Your parents submit documents certifying their income and financial assets.
- A resident in Germany provides the Aliens' Registration Office a guarantee to cover your expenses.
- A security payment is deposited into a blocked account.
- You submit a bank guarantee.
- You receive a scholarship from a recognised scholarship provider.

Be sure to enquire at the German embassy in your country as to which form of financial proof is required.

Please note: International students are only allowed to work in Germany under certain conditions. A part-time job may supplement your budget, but it almost certainly won't be able to cover all your living expenses (see pp. 68-71).

### What kind of funding can I apply for?

You now have an idea of the costs you can expect. But you might not have to pay for everything yourself. There are numerous scholarships and funding possibilities that can help students pay for their study visit in Germany.



#### Scholarships

International students can apply for scholarships from numerous organisations, such as the DAAD, politically-affiliated foundations, religious institutions and business-related organisations. You should find out whether you are eligible for scholarships and financial aid from organisations in your home country, as well.

The DAAD offers an extensive scholarship programme for German and international students, academics and researchers. Please note: Neither the DAAD nor the majority of funding institutions offer scholarships for beginning undergraduates.

#### Funding for European students

There are special exchange programmes for students from the EU countries and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

For example, Erasmus+ promotes the exchange of European students in bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes. Students receive grants to study abroad for a period of three to twelve months. The exchange is arranged on the basis of bilateral university

agreements. This means that if you would like to study in Germany with Erasmus+, you enrol as a visiting student at the German university with which your home university cooperates. Erasmus students usually don't have to pay tuition fees in the host country.

Internships are also funded during or even after one's degree programme for a period of two to twelve months.

Each student may receive funding multiple times during his/her studies. However, the total funding period may not exceed twelve months. Master's students can also apply for low-interest student loans to finance their studies.

You can obtain more information and advice concerning Erasmus+, the application process and submission deadlines at the International Office at your university, or at the National Agency in your home country.

#### **More information?**

**[ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus)**

### **Scholarship Database**

With the DAAD Scholarship Database, it's easy to research various types of scholarships online. The database includes scholarships offered by the DAAD and other funding organisations, as well.

#### **More information?**

**[www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de)**

# 1.4

## Applying for a degree programme



In this section we tell you the most important things you should know about applying for admission to a degree programme at a German university.

There are different ways to apply for admission to a German university. The form of application depends on which subject you wish to study.

We distinguish between two categories of subjects in Germany:

- Subjects with a **centrally restricted admission policy** (nationwide *Numerus clausus*). These subjects are so popular that there are far more applicants than available places at the university. At present, these subjects include Medicine, Pharmacology, Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry.
- Subjects with **no or a locally restricted admission policy** (*Numerus clausus* implemented by the university).

The following information only serves as a general guideline and applies only to public universities. To be on the safe side, enquire about the application procedures pertaining to your degree programme at the International Office at your German university.

### Numerus clausus ...

... is a Latin term which means “limited number”. It indicates that there are only a limited number of spaces free at the university or in Germany in the respective course of study. In most cases, there are more applicants than spaces available which means that special selection criteria and conditions for admission apply to applicants in these courses of study.

### How do I apply for a subject with a centrally restricted admission policy?

A nationwide *Numerus clausus* (NC) applies to those subjects for which there are more applicants in Germany than the university system can absorb. If you wish to study one of these subjects, there are special conditions that pertain to your application.



# "The ideal recipe for my career: I'm studying in Germany."

Margarita Valdiviezo from Peru is doing her master's degree in Food Technology and Biotechnology at the Technische Universität München.



Margarita was photographed in the restaurant "Der Pschorr" in Munich.



[www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de)

Study in  
Germany



Land of Ideas

Where you submit your application depends on:

- the country you come from, and
- whether you have a German higher education entrance qualification (see p. 19–20).

The following applicants are required to submit their application for admission to degree programmes with a local or national *Numerus clausus* to the **Foundation for University Admission** (*Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung*):

- Applicants from EU member states, as well as Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway
- Applicants who have received their secondary school-leaving certificate in Germany or at a German School abroad

### More information?

**[www.hochschulstart.de](http://www.hochschulstart.de)**

All other applicants should submit their applications directly to the university of their choice, or apply through uni-assist.

### How do I apply for other subjects?

If you wish to study a subject with no centrally restricted admission policy, you should submit your application to uni-assist (see info box). If the university of your choice does not work together with uni-assist, then send your application directly to the university's International Office or the Student Administration Office. For more information about application procedures, visit the website of the university of your

choice or contact the university's International Office.

A list of universities which cooperate with uni-assist is available at **<http://www.uni-assist.de/universities.html>**.

But as mentioned above, please enquire about the application procedures at the International Office at the university of your choice.

### What is uni-assist?

The University Application Service for International Students (uni-assist) is a competence centre specialised in reviewing international certificates. Uni-assist is commissioned by member universities to determine whether submitted certificates qualify the applicant for admission to university in Germany. Most universities also commission uni-assist to review additional documentation, such as language certificates.

You can apply to several universities at one time via uni-assist. You only have to submit your transcripts and language certificates once. Uni-assist quickly reviews your application materials and informs if you have forgotten any important documents. If everything appears to be in order, uni-assist forwards your applications electronically to the universities of your choice. For selected universities, uni-assist will send you a certificate called the preliminary review documentation (VPD). With this document, you may apply to the respective university directly.

Please note that the university (not uni-assist) makes the final admission decision.

**More information?**  
**[www.uni-assist.de](http://www.uni-assist.de)**

## How much does it cost to apply?

You are required to provide a number of documents and certificates with your application for admission to a German university. In most cases, you will also be charged a processing fee. Be prepared to pay the following charges and fees:

- Fees for notarising copies and translations
- Examination fee for the TestDaF or DSH (the cost of which depends on where you take the test)
- Processing fee for the application (see below)

The cost of the processing fee depends on where you apply.

Through uni-assist: For the first university, all applicants are required to pay 75 euros for the evaluation of international certificates and the preliminary examination of the application documents, and another 15 euros for each additional university in the same semester.

Directly to a university: Some universities charge a processing fee for reviewing your application and supplementary documents.

Please remember that your application will only be processed after you have paid the fee!

Directly to the Foundation for University Admission: No application processing fee.

## What must I submit with my application?

You can obtain an application form from the university of your choice, uni-assist, the DAAD website or the Foundation for University Admission (*Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung*).

Additional documents are also required, such as:

- Notarised copy of your secondary school-leaving certificate
- Notarised copies of all previous university degree certificates
- Passport photo
- Photocopy of your passport identification page (the page with photo and personal info)
- Certificate of language proficiency (see pp. 22–23)

Please note: Copies of documents will only be accepted if they have been notarised and are accompanied with a notarised translation in German. The German mission in your country, for example, can notarise copies and translations of your certificates. Some universities also accept copies of documents in English or French.

Your application will only be processed if you have submitted all the necessary documentation and paid the processing fee.





The application deadline is usually several months prior to the beginning of the new semester. Therefore, if you are unsure whether your application is complete, contact the International Office well in advance so that you can send the missing documents in time.

The admissions office will send you written notification regarding the outcome of your application. If you are accepted, you will receive notification of admission. In the letter, you will also find:

- Information regarding your place of study
- An acceptance reply card, which you must immediately sign and return to the admissions office
- Information regarding the enrolment (registration) period (see p. 52)
- Information regarding tests or certificates which you must still pass or obtain (if applicable)
- Testing date of a German language test or university preparatory entrance examination (if applicable)
- Invitation to an orientation event for new international students (if applicable, see p. 55)

### Help with your application

At [www.inobis.de](http://www.inobis.de) you can find a broad spectrum of useful information and databases on university admission and application with comprehensive application checklists relevant to your desired degree, the university of your choice and your country of origin.

### What important dates do I have to know?

Contact the International Office at your university to find out the exact application deadline for your specific degree programme. The university must receive your application by that date, or otherwise it will not be processed.

Also bear in mind that if you apply through uni-assist, you should submit your documents as early as possible, i.e. no later than eight weeks prior to the application deadline.

#### If you wish to **begin your studies in the winter semester:**

- Submission period: end of May to 15th July
- Notification of admission will be sent to you in August / September.
- Rejection letters are sent out in September / October.

#### If you wish to **begin your studies in the summer semester:**

- Submission period: beginning of December to 15th January
- Notification of admission will be sent to you in February / March.
- Rejection letters are sent out in March / April.

Please note that some universities have different deadlines, some programmes offer enrolment in the winter semester only, and some deadlines are even earlier than those listed below.

# 1.5

## Entering and staying in Germany

In this section we tell you whether you will need an entry visa and / or residence permit.

As an international student, you may require a visa depending on where you come from and how long you wish to stay in Germany.



### Do I need a visa?

► **Are you a citizen of an EU member state or Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland?**

All you need to enter the country is a valid personal ID card or passport. Once you have arrived in Germany and found accommodation, you must register with your local Residents' Registration Office where you can obtain confirmation of your right of residence (see p. 53).

► **Are you a citizen from a country other than those named above?**

You may need a visa depending on how long you intend to stay in Germany.

Generally **all foreigners** must apply for a visa at the responsible German diplomatic mission in their home country **before** travelling to Germany. However, there are **exceptions for certain nationals**

depending on the purpose and length of their visit:

Citizens of **Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea** and the **United States of America** can travel to Germany regardless of how long they intend to stay. They are required, however, to obtain a valid residence permit within their first three months in Germany. If you come from **Andorra, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Monaco or San Marino** and intend to stay longer than 90 days, you may only enter the country without a visa as long as you do not intend to seek employment in Germany.

Nationals from the following countries may travel to Germany without a visa **if their stay will not exceed 90 days and if they don't intend to seek employment in Germany:** Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Brunei Darussalem, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, East Timor, Grenada, Guatemala, Kiribati, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia,

**St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Vatican City and Venezuela.**

The same applies to nationals from **Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova and Montenegro** who hold a biometric passport. For nationals from **Hong Kong, Macau, Serbia and Taiwan**, these rules apply for holders of passports with special features. These provisions were valid as of November 2016. For current information and an overview of visa requirements, visit [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/EinreiseUndAufenthalt/StaatenlisteVisumpflicht\\_node.html](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/EinreiseUndAufenthalt/StaatenlisteVisumpflicht_node.html)

Visit the DAAD website at [www.daad.de/deutschland/download](http://www.daad.de/deutschland/download) for more details on the legal regulations for entering and staying in Germany.

The German Federal Foreign Office provides answers to frequently asked questions regarding visas and current visa requirements for every country in the world at [www.diplo.de/visa](http://www.diplo.de/visa).

If you would like more information or have questions regarding visa applications, contact the German embassy or consulate in your home country. You can find the addresses of the German missions around the world at [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de).

## What kind of visa do I need?

The type of visa you need depends on – among other things – whether you have already received your notification of admission from a German university.

Important: Do not enter the country as a tourist (with a so-called “*Schengen visa*”)! A tourist visa cannot be converted to a student or applicant visa.

### Applicant visa

If you have **not yet received notification of admission** to a university or university preparatory course, you should apply for an applicant visa.

This three-month visa allows you to meet the admission requirements. If you find that three months is not long enough, you may extend your visa to a maximum of six months. If you are admitted to the university or a university preparatory course within this period, you may apply for a student visa, or a residence permit for purposes of study.

### Student visa

If you have received your **notification of admission to university** or a **university preparatory course**, you should apply for a student visa. Student visas are usually issued for a **duration of three months**. Within this three-month period, you must apply for a residence permit at your local Aliens’ Registration Office (see p. 54).

### What documents do I need to apply for a visa?

We recommend contacting the German mission in your country for a complete list of documents required for a visa application. As a rule, you will be asked to present:

- Certificate confirming health insurance coverage (see p. 26)
- Proof of financial resources (see p. 28)
- Certificates of past academic work and achievements
- Certificate of German language proficiency or proof that you intend on participating in a language course in Germany
- **For a student visa:** notification of admission from your German university. If you have not yet received this letter, you may present instead a statement from the university confirming its intention to admit you.
- **For an applicant visa:** a higher education entrance qualification recognised in Germany

### Medical examination

If you apply for a visa, you may be asked to present a health certificate. You can obtain information regarding this requirement at the German mission in your country.





## 1.6

# Finding accommodation before you leave



In this section we tell you how to start looking for accommodation in Germany before you leave home.

Students in Germany either live in a student hall of residence or in private accommodation. In contrast to other countries, German universities do not automatically allocate rooms to students when they enrol (see p. 52).

Students are usually responsible for finding their own accommodation. Depending on where you live and what your financial situation is like, this may not be an easy task. Therefore, start looking for a place to stay very early – ideally before you arrive in Germany.

The International Office at the university of your choice can provide useful information for finding private and shared flats.

### How do I get a room in a student hall of residence?

There are several student halls of residence in many university towns. A room in a hall of residence is probably the cheapest accommodation you will find (see p. 25).

In some university towns, obtaining a room in a student hall of residence is not easy. But your chances are much better if you apply early enough. We recommend applying as soon as you receive your notification of admission from the German university of your choice.

The **DAAD Student Residence Finder database** at [www.daad.de/wohnen](http://www.daad.de/wohnen) is quite useful for finding information about various student residences in 80 university towns in Germany. With just a few clicks, you can even submit an application to the Studentenwerk for a room in a student residence.

Although the Studentenwerk is usually responsible for allocating rooms at student halls of residence, the International Office at some universities also offers this service. Therefore, enquire first at your International Office about how to go about applying for a room in a hall of residence.

## What kind of private accommodation is available?

There is a wide variety of private accommodation in every city. You will find offers for empty rooms and fully furnished apartments.

Therefore, you could look for a flat or room to let. Rooms in shared flats are often available, as well.

A shared flat (*WG*) is one in which several people live. Each flatmate has a room of his / her own and shares the kitchen, bathroom and sometimes the living room, as well. The cost of rent, telephone and internet is divided between all the flatmates. This form of accommodation is very popular among students.

In most cases, tenancy contracts must be signed in person on location. This means that you will have to wait until you arrive in Germany before you can finally secure private accommodation. But you can already prepare for your search by looking into possibilities via the internet right before you leave, and perhaps arrange an appointment to view a flat. To learn how this works and where to find housing advertisements, see p. 51.

## Where can I spend the first nights?

You don't have a place to stay when you arrive in Germany? Before you leave, you should decide where you plan to spend the first few nights. There are a number of possibilities which the International Office at your university can tell you more about.

In some cities, the Studentenwerk and university community offer new students affordable places to stay for the first days. Of course, you always have the option of staying at a private Pension (a small hotel), a youth hotel or a youth hostel. If you wish to take a room at a youth hostel, you must be a member of the International Youth Hostel Federation. You can apply for membership directly at the youth hostel for a small fee.

### More information?

[www.daad.de/wohnen](http://www.daad.de/wohnen)

[www.jugendherberge.de](http://www.jugendherberge.de)

[www.hostelbookers.com](http://www.hostelbookers.com)

## 1.7

# Planning your study visit: Step by step on your way to Germany



## Checklist

### ► 18 months before arrival

**Making the big decisions: Where, what and how long do I want to study?**

I know

- ☐ where I can find information about study visits in Germany and have used one of the following contact options:
  - ☐ [www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de) and [www.daad.de](http://www.daad.de)
  - ☐ DAAD branch office in my country
  - ☐ German instructor at my university
  - ☐ Higher education fairs in my country
- ☐ approximately how long my study visit should be.
- ☐ what type of degree I want to pursue.
- ☐ what subject I want to study.
- ☐ what type of university is right for me.
- ☐ which universities offer my desired major.

### ► 15 months before arrival

**Checking the requirements: Do I have everything or is there anything I still need to do?**

I know

- ☐ that my school-leaving certificate or prior education is sufficient for admission to a German university.
- ☐ that my German or English language skills are sufficient for the degree programme I wish to enrol in.
- ☐ how I'm going to finance my studies and where I can apply for a scholarship if necessary.

### ► 12 months before arrival

**Preparing the application: What do I need and when?**

I know

- ☐ where I have to apply.
- ☐ what documents are required for my application and where I can obtain them.
- ☐ when I have to submit my application.

### ► 6 months before arrival

#### Planning your trip: How do I get there?

I know

- ☐ how I'm getting to Germany and when I have to book the trip.
- ☐ whether I require an entry visa and how to obtain one.

### ► 3 months before arrival

#### Arranging accommodation: Where am I going to live?

I know

- ☐ what kind of accommodation I'd like to have:
  - ☐ Student residence
  - ☐ Flat share
  - ☐ Rented flat of my own
- ☐ how to go about finding a flat or applying for a room in a student residence (see pp. 40–41).
- ☐ where I'll be spending the first nights if I haven't found a room yet.

### ► 1 month before arrival

#### The countdown begins: Do I need anything else?

I have

- ☐ booked my trip.
- ☐ made plans for finding accommodation and have a place to stay for the first nights.
- ☐ drawn up a packing list.

### ► Final Check

These important papers and documents I need to bring along:

- ☐ Passport, valid for as long as I wish to stay in Germany
- ☐ Visa, if applicable (see pp. 36–38)
- ☐ Notification of admission from the German university or the confirmation that the application is being processed
- ☐ Proof of financial resources (see p. 28)
- ☐ Originals with certified copies and certified translations (!) of the following documents:
  - ☐ Birth certificate
  - ☐ Secondary school-leaving certificate
  - ☐ University diplomas, language certificates, if applicable
- ☐ Confirmation of health insurance coverage from the provider if the policy is recognised in Germany (see p. 26)
- ☐ Vaccination card, if applicable (contact the German foreign mission in your country for information about required vaccinations)

### ► After arrival – The first step in Germany:

- ☐ I visit the International Office and have them explain to me where to go and what to do.

## 2.

# Getting started in Germany

In this chapter we tell you what you have to do during your first few days and weeks in Germany and where you can get help if you need it.

There are several things you'll immediately have to do when you arrive in Germany:

- Find accommodation (if you haven't yet)
- Enrol at the university
- Register at the Residents' Registration Office
- Apply for a residence permit, if necessary
- Make a course timetable

There are many places that provide support and assistance with these tasks. Always remember, if you have questions or problems, there are many people available to help you.

### Recommended reading

You can obtain more detailed information and helpful advice about studying and living in Germany in the brochure **"Destination Germany"**. Print copies of this and other brochures are available at DAAD offices worldwide (for addresses, see pp. 82-87) or electronically at <https://www.daad.de/deutschland/nach-deutschland/publikationen/en/>.

## 2.1

# Getting help

Here we tell you who can best answer your questions in Germany and give you a general overview of where you can get help on campus.

### First step: The International Office    The Studentenwerk

Perhaps the most important contact for international students is the International Office (*Akademisches Auslandsamt*). Every university has an International Office responsible for fostering international university relations.

When you were planning your stay in Germany, you probably contacted the International Office at your German university. The staff at the International Office can also help you with problems you encounter after you arrive in Germany.

The International Office can provide you with all the necessary information for your first days in Germany. It can assist you with formalities, such as enrolling (see p. 52) and help you find a place to live.

The addresses of the International Offices at all German universities are listed on [www.daad.de/aaa](http://www.daad.de/aaa). Like most university offices, the International Office is usually open to students during the semester in the mornings from Monday to Friday.

The Studentenwerk is a national association that provides a wide range of services for students at German universities. For example, it allocates rooms at student halls of residence and operates the dining halls at the university.

Some Studentenwerk organisations offer special service packages to international students. These services make it easier for foreign students to adapt to studying and living in Germany.

The specific services included in these packages vary depending on the university. In most cases, they include:

- Room in a student hall of residence (see p. 40)
- Social fee and occasionally a semester ticket (see pp. 24–25)
- Cultural events and excursions
- Meal vouchers for the dining hall
- Assistance with taking out a public or private health insurance policy (see p. 26)







At some universities the Studentenwerk offers sport and language courses and rents out bicycles, computers, crockery and bedding. Depending on the specific services it includes, the package can cost between 158 and 358 euros per month and is only valid for a maximum of two semesters. The package is not offered at all universities and only a limited number is allotted to each Studentenwerk. If you are interested, enquire at the Studentenwerk at your German university as early as possible.

The Studentenwerk also provides assistance and services to students with disabilities.

#### **More information?**

**[www.internationale-studierende.de](http://www.internationale-studierende.de)**

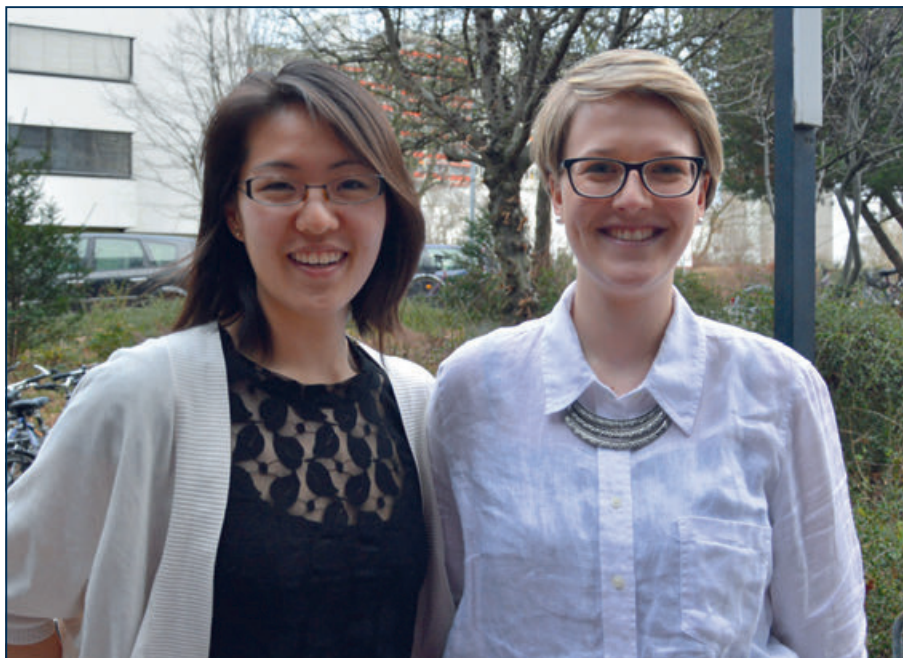
## **Advising programmes**

Many universities offer special services to international students to get them off to a good academic start. These include orientation and welcoming events, train and airport pick-up services and other advising programmes.

Some universities have established special mentoring programmes (also called “Study Buddy” programmes) which pair up new international students with personal mentors. These are usually experienced students who accompany foreign students to the registration offices, help solve everyday problems, answer study-related questions, etc. Mentors frequently establish contact with their foreign partners even before they’ve arrived in Germany.

Mentoring programmes are sometimes organised by the city where the university is located. In such cases, your mentor wouldn’t be a student, but an average German who is interested in meeting and conversing with an international student. Inquire at the International Office whether such a programme exists in your university town.

Many Studentenwerk organisations employ residence hall tutors who support, advise and look after international students. Currently, over 600 students work as tutors in student residence halls all over Germany. Ask the staff at the International Office whether such a tutor programme is offered at your university.



### *Lena wrote to me ...*

*by e-mail before my trip to Germany. It was a good feeling to ask her all my questions – for example, about insurance and opening a bank account. Without her, I definitely would have had a harder time getting started in Germany. In the beginning, we spoke English together, and then gradually switched to German. With Lena, I can immerse myself even more in the German language. And she also shows me the many small details and nuances that distinguish the culture. It's been very, very helpful to me – and something very special.*

**Anna Yuwen** comes from the United States and is enrolled in the North American Studies master's degree programme at the University of Bonn.

### *The personal contact ...*

*to international students is what I like most about the Study Buddy Programme. I like being able to help Anna get situated here. And it's fun being a part of her life in Germany. In the beginning, we went to the municipal authorities together and bought furniture. Now when we meet, we talk and go on excursions. And it's incredible how much I've learned about myself – like when Anna finds something funny that I think is totally normal. And at the same time, I've been learning a lot about American culture and life.*

**Lena Wiemer** studied English and Media Studies at the University of Bonn and volunteered in the Study Buddy Programme there.

## Student unions

You can also get help and advice from the student union. The student union is elected by students to represent their interests. The student union is commonly referred to as “AStA” (General Student Committee) or StuRa (Student Council).

Student unions are responsible for organising athletic, cultural and recreational programmes at the university. They offer advice on where to look for a job or accommodation. Sometimes they organise car-pools to other cities. Some student unions even offer German courses to international students and help non-German speaking students find a language partner (see p. 66).

## International student organisations

Many German universities have student organisations which specialise in assisting international students. They support newcomers, organise parties, excursions and pub evenings at which one can quickly get into contact with other students (see pp. 61–63).

## Departmental committees

If you have any specific questions concerning your subject, we recommend turning to your departmental committee (Fach-schaft) for help. This committee is comprised of a group of students who are elected to represent student interests in a certain department. At the beginning of each semester, the departmental committee organises information events for new students. This is where you can find out how to plan your studies. It's also a good place to get to know other students. The departmental committee can also provide you with the initial orientation at your new university.





## 2.2

# Finding accommodation

In this section we tell you how to go about finding a flat and where to get help if you need it.

If you haven't found accommodation in Germany yet, you need to decide where to stay for the first few nights. See p. 41 for suggestions on where to find accommodation on short notice.

### What do I need to know when looking for a flat?

As we've mentioned earlier, it's best to start looking for accommodation in Germany before you leave home, particularly if you'd like to live in a student hall of residence (see p. 40).

However, if you'd rather take private accommodation – a small flat or a room in a shared flat (see p. 41) – you should start looking intensively once you've arrived in Germany. Usually landlords or flat-tenants only let rooms to people they've met in person. This means you will have to view the flat and speak with the landlord personally. If you like the accommodation and agree to the terms, and the landlord accepts you as a tenant, you can then sign a tenancy agreement. Enquire at the International Office for

helpful advice on finding accommodation in your area.

### Where do I find ads for flats to rent?

Offers for free rooms and flats can be found in flat advertisements – and these can be found in many different places. At some universities, the Studentenwerk, student union or International Office offer an accommodation service for students. There you can find addresses of private landlords who have rooms to let. There is also a notice board at the university called a Schwarzes Brett with offers for rooms to let. You can also leave a message on the board saying that you are currently looking for a room.

Apartment-finding websites on the Internet are also very helpful. Some specialise in finding accommodations especially for students, and usually they don't charge for want ads. For example:

**[www.studenten-wg.de](http://www.studenten-wg.de)**  
**[www.wg-suche.de](http://www.wg-suche.de)**  
**[www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de)**

## 2.3

# Enrolling at your university

In this section we tell you how to enrol (register) at your university in Germany.

Before you can study at a German university, you first have to enrol. This procedure is called enrolment or registration (*Immatrikulation*). Once you're formally enrolled, you may attend courses at your university, take examinations and finally receive an academic degree. Enrolment also allows you to access all facilities at the university, for example, the library, sports grounds and computer rooms.

You may enrol at your German university as soon as you receive your notification of admission (see p. 35) from the International Office or the Foundation for University Admission. The notification also includes information concerning the enrolment period. Please note that the enrolment period can be rather short and you have to show up at your university's Registrar's Office in person in order to enrol.

You have to bring several documents with you when you enrol. Please enquire at the International Office about which ones are required at your university. In any case, the registration officials are sure to ask for the following two documents:

- Your notification of admission
- Confirmation of health insurance coverage

Once you've enrolled, you will immediately receive written confirmation. This confirmation serves as your student identification until you receive your official student ID by post. You will require this confirmation of enrolment, for example, when you apply for a residence permit at the Aliens' Registration Office (see p. 54).

## 2.4

# Taking care of formalities

In this section we tell you where you have to register after you've found an accommodation and enrolled at the university.

So, you've found a room or flat? Now you will have to take care of some formalities. But don't worry – you can count on the International Office for help.

### What do I have to do at the Residents' Registration Office?

Once you have found accommodation, you have to inform the Residents' Registration Office (*Einwohnermeldeamt*) of your place of residence. In some cities, this office is called the *Bürgeramt* or *Bürgerzentrum*. In larger cities, it is usually located in the district office or *Bürgerbüro* responsible for the city quarter in which you live. Ask the International Office for the address.

You will need the following documents to register:

- Your passport, visa or official ID card
- confirmation of residence from your landlord (corresponding form is available online as a PDF download)

You may also be asked to provide confirmation of enrolment or a copy of your passport. Before you go, we recommend enquiring at your International Office about exactly which documents you should bring along.

After you have filled out a registration form, you will receive confirmation of registration. Make sure to take good care of this document as you may need it later to verify your place of residence.

Please note: Anyone who lives in Germany and moves to a new location is required to inform the Residents' Registration Office of their new place of residence within one week after moving in.

## How do I get a residence permit?

The formalities involved with obtaining a residence permit depend on which country you come from.

### ► Are you a citizen of an EU member state, or Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland?

You will receive a certificate confirming your right of residence when you register at the Residents' Registration Office. In some cases, you may be asked to show how you intend to pay for your living expenses (see p. 28) and provide proof that you have health insurance (see p. 26).

### ► Are you a citizen from a country not listed above?

After you have registered at the Residents' Registration Office, you will have to go to the Aliens' Registration Office (*Ausländerbehörde*) in your city. The International Office can give you the address and a list of documents you should bring along.

You have to apply for a residence permit at the Aliens' Registration Office. When you apply for the first time, you will be charged a processing fee of up to 110 euros. Extending your residence permit can cost upwards to 80 euros. To obtain your permit, you must show up in person at the Aliens' Registration Office with the following documents:

- Confirmation of registration from the Residents' Registration Office (see p. 53)
- Confirmation of health insurance coverage (see pp. 26–27)
- Confirmation of enrolment from your German university (see p. 52)
- Proof of financial resources (see p. 28)
- Your passport and current visa, if you have one (see pp. 36–38)
- Certificate of health, if applicable (see p. 38)
- Money (in cash) for the residence permit fee
- Your tenancy agreement
- Biometric passport photos

An electronic residence permit was introduced in Germany in September 2011. Essentially, it is a chip card containing your personal data, passport photo and fingerprints. After four to six weeks, you may pick up your card (in person) from the Aliens' Registration Office. Your initial permit will be valid for at least one year and a maximum of two years, and may be extended, if necessary.



## 2.5

# Organising your studies

In this section we provide you with important information about how to organise your studies in Germany, for example, what kind of courses there are, how the degree programmes are structured and how to schedule your courses.

Studying at a university is very different from going to school – perhaps even more so in Germany than in other countries. While secondary school pupils are provided with a fixed timetable, university students have more freedom in planning their studies. They can often choose between many different courses that interest them.

The freedom to organise your studies requires a certain amount of independence and initiative. This doesn't mean, however, that you have to make every decision yourself. Take advantage of the advising services at your university. There are orientation events for new students at the beginning of every semester. These events are offered by **the student union** and the **departmental committees** (see p. 49) and provide information about the university, its facilities and the structure of your degree programme.

In addition, the International Office usually organises an extra orientation event for new international students. The event offers helpful advice concerning how to plan your studies. An invitation to the

event is usually included along with your notification of admission.

### What kind of courses are there?

There are several kinds of courses you can take at German universities. Their importance depends on your degree programme and the type of university you attend.

The most important forms of instruction are lectures, seminars / courses, tutorials / practical sessions, revision courses and colloquiums.

**Lectures** (*Vorlesungen*) are held by university instructors on a certain theme. Although there is generally no limit to how many students may attend, there is also no open discussion during the lectures.

Discussions with the professors and other students play a central role in **seminars** (*Seminare*) and **courses** (*Kurse*). The number of participants is often restricted.

In a **tutorial** (*Tutorium*), students may review and further investigate the content of a lecture in more detail. These sessions are taught by tutors (often upper-level or graduate students). Such courses, which accompany lectures and seminars, may also be taught by lecturers, assistant lecturers, assistant researchers, etc. These courses are often called **practical sessions** (*Übungen*).

Some degree programmes also offer **working** or **learning groups**. These groups provide students the chance to review the course material, prep each other for upcoming exams or collaborate on joint projects.

### Faculties, schools / institutes, departments

At larger universities, various disciplines are sometimes bundled into faculties or schools, such as the "Faculty of Philosophy" or the "School of Medicine".

Each subject is supervised by an institute or department. Depending on the university, the institute or department may be situated in a building of its own, or on one or more floors of the main building. This is where you will find your instructors' offices, as well as a library of subject-specific literature. If nothing else, your department is an ideal place to make academic and personal contacts.

In some subjects, **revision courses** (*Repetitorien*) give students the opportunity to review the course material together with a university instructor in order to prepare for an examination.

**Colloquiums** are events at which students can share and discuss ideas with one another right before the final examination phase.

Some universities have also developed **online learning modules**. They are intended to supplement other courses offered at the university. You can find internationally oriented e-learning programmes at [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes).

More and more **MOOCs** (Massive Open Online Courses) are being offered as well. These online courses are free and open to everyone. You can find a listing of MOOCs offered at German universities at <http://iversity.org>.

### How are degree programmes structured?

The study regulations at your university stipulate the structure of its degree programmes. They specify the content of the programme and what students are required to do to receive a degree (see pp. 12–13). Therefore, obtain the study regulations concerning the degree programme you have chosen. The study regulations are usually posted on the website of your department or institute.

**Bachelor's** and **master's degree programmes** are divided into **modules**. Modules are academic units comprised

## ECTS credit points

Academic achievement in bachelor's and master's degree programmes is assessed on the basis of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The ECTS determines the amount of work necessary to attain an academic degree. This includes the preparation and revision of the course material, attaining certificates of achievement and preparing for examinations. Completed assignments are marked and count toward the final grade.

One credit point is equivalent to 25–30 hours of work. The programmes are usually structured in such a way that students have to take 30 credits per semester to complete the programme in the prescribed time.

The ECTS makes it easier for universities in other countries to recognise students' academic achievement. If your university at home does not recognise these credit points, you can have your course participation and passed examinations certified by your professor or lecturer.

of thematically related courses – e. g. lectures, seminars and practical sessions.

Credit points are awarded for each module that you successfully complete. In order to finish your studies, you must obtain the total amount of credit required by your programme.

Depending on the study regulations, students require 180 to 240 credit points for a bachelor's degree. 60 to 120 credit points are required for a master's degree.

## What kind of examinations are there?

You can collect credit points by regularly attending lectures or sessions. However, courses often conclude with an examination. There are several types of examinations, for example:

- Written examinations
- Short presentations on a particular subject
- Seminar papers on a particular subject
- Oral examinations

## How do I draw up a course timetable?

The study regulations for your degree programme provide a general overview of the material covered in your programme and the modules you have to complete. However, it does not offer a specific course timetable, as each module is comprised of courses of varying thematic focus from which you can choose.

To draw up a **course timetable**, you will need a **course prospectus** (*Vorlesungsverzeichnis*). It may also be helpful to consult the **annotated course programme** (KVV) available on your institute's website. The KVV provides detailed descriptions of all the courses offered during the upcoming semester. Often these descriptions are supplemented by a list of relevant literature to help you prepare for the course.

Usually you are required to register for the seminars and lectures which you select for your module. Most institutes allow students to register for their courses online.

Some subjects are extremely popular, and as a result, the size of the courses is restricted. Therefore, if you would really like to attend a particular seminar, be sure to register well in advance.

Have you now drawn up a timetable? Have you registered for your courses? If so, then you're ready to start studying in Germany.





### 3.

## Making the most of your stay

In this final chapter we describe three important ways of making your stay in Germany a positive experience – making contacts, learning German and gaining professional experience.

Naturally, you would like to get acclimated and feel comfortable in Germany as quickly as possible. Perhaps you also wish to gain valuable, practical experience on the German labour market during your studies. We offer you several tips for achieving just that.

## 3.1

# Making contacts

In this section we tell you where you can meet people and make friends and contacts during your studies.

Academic success is certainly not the only factor that determines how comfortable you are in Germany. The quality of life is largely influenced by the personal contacts you make.

University life is different in every city – perhaps because every university is different. Some universities are rather small and familiar. Others are vast institutions of learning and research where it's not always easy to get to know other students.

Therefore, we've listed a few ideas below to help you make contacts easier. Of course, you will surely discover other ways to make friends and establish contacts yourself.

**Tipp 1: Participate in the orientation events for new students.** These events are usually organised by the student union, your institute or department, or the International Office. Orientation events are ideal for meeting students who – like you – are yet unacquainted with the university.

**Tipp 2: Attend pub evenings, join university societies and sports courses, go to parties.** In Germany, social life often takes place in cafés, pubs and restaurants, and as a result, students like getting together at their favourite pub. Some institutes and university organisations arrange so-called **Stammtische** or pub evenings. At a *Stammtisch* you can get to know your fellow students better and perhaps make plans to do something later on.

There are **societies** at every university where students get together who have common interests and hobbies. You are sure to find a wide variety of student clubs, political groups, university choirs, orchestras, theatre groups and much more. Such societies are an ideal place to make contacts. Enquire at your student union or the Central Student Counselling Office about the student societies at your university.



## *We build bridges ...*

*for intercultural exchange. AEGEE helps international students forge contacts and become acquainted with German culture. We organise excursions around the area, but also day trips to Berlin or the Christmas market in Nuremberg. We also offer “ice-breaker” weekends and a Stammtisch. Lots of students participate in our events at the beginning of the semester, but their number decreases as time goes on. But that’s a good sign – it means they quickly find friends in Germany thanks to the jumpstart we’ve given them.*

**Alicia Clesius** studies Sociology at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and helps international students in her function as president of the AEGEE Mainz-Wiesbaden.

There are **religious student congregations** in most university towns in Germany. These groups not only gather for worship, but also organise excursions, parties, discussions and many other events for their members. For a list of addresses, visit your university website.

There are also a number of **international student organisations** in Germany. These organisations hold events that are ideal for meeting people and sharing information. These include:

- **AEGEE** – Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l’Europe / European Students’ Forum:  
A European student association of all faculties ([www.aegEE.org](http://www.aegEE.org))
- **AIESEC**: The world’s largest student organisation in the field of economics and business administration ([www.aiesec.de](http://www.aiesec.de))
- **ELSA** – European Law Students’ Association: A student organisation for prospective lawyers ([www.elsa-germany.org](http://www.elsa-germany.org))



Every university offers a wide range of **sports groups** in practically every discipline imaginable. Most groups are free to join and provide many opportunities to meet other students. You can obtain the current list of sports groups from your university's website.

And finally, you can make new acquaintances at university parties that are held every semester.

**Tip 3: Use social media.** Of course, you can make virtual contact with people first – for example, via the Facebook page operated by your German university. And if you log onto **www.facebook.com/Study.in.Germany**, you can connect with over 450,000 people from around the world who are currently studying or are planning to study in Germany.

**Tip 4: Dare to take the first step.** Don't wait for others to approach you. Seize the initiative and talk to other students. And take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way.

## 3.2

# Learning to speak (better) German

In this section we tell you how much German you need to successfully study and live in Germany and how you can improve your German.

Studying at a German university usually requires some knowledge of German. However, just how much depends largely on your degree programme.

### How much German do I need?

If you are enrolled in an English-language degree programme, you generally require no knowledge of German. On the other hand, you must have a good level of proficiency in English.

For degree programmes taught in German, you will need better proficiency in German for the social sciences than in the natural sciences – particularly in terms of writing and speaking.

Your language ability must be sufficient to understand lectures and participate in discussions in seminars. You will also have to understand scientific texts. You should be able to adequately discuss scientific topics orally, and analyse and argue positions in written form.

When you apply to a degree programme at a German university, you will have

to submit certificates confirming your German proficiency (see pp. 22–23). Of course, this shouldn't be the only reason to learn German. Even after you've passed a language examination or achieved the necessary test results, you should continue working to improve your German.

Language skills are not only necessary for your studies. Knowing German is important for life outside the university. It will help you master daily life, participate more intensively in German society and significantly improve your chances of making contact with others.

### DUO online language course

The DUO online language course prepares students at all language levels for university study in Germany.

**More information?**  
[www.deutsch-uni.com](http://www.deutsch-uni.com)



### *The fastest way ...*

*I learn German is when I discuss things with other students or talk with people at parties. Only if you really use the language, listening and expressing yourself, can you make progress. And that, in turn, helps you make friends.*

*I think being curious about German culture has helped me very much to learn the language. When I tell my friends something about my cultural background in German, I suddenly notice connections that I hadn't been aware of before. Of course, in some subjects, German skills are not as important as they are, for instance, in Philosophy or German Studies. But if you speak German well, you simply have more possibilities.*

**Plato Tse** comes from China and is pursuing his PhD in Philosophy at the LMU Munich.

### **How can I improve my German?**

Ideally you should learn as much German as possible before you come to Germany. German courses are offered, for example, at the many Goethe Institutes around the world ([www.goethe.de](http://www.goethe.de)).

In addition to classroom lessons, you can participate in online language courses at the Goethe-Institute at the A1 to B2 levels. Deutsche Welle also offers free online courses ([www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com), “Deutsch lernen”). And the website [www.deutsch.info](http://www.deutsch.info) offers self-study German courses, along with practical information about life in Germany.

Another way to learn more German in your home country is to participate in a language tandem (see p. 66) via Skype or e-mail.

If you wish to improve your language skills in Germany or have to increase your proficiency in order to be admitted into a degree programme, there is a wide range of opportunities available.

**German universities** offer language courses during the semester, for which students often have to pay an extra course fee. Some universities host intensive summer courses which offer German language instruction to international

students at varying levels. These courses generally take place between June and September.

### More information?

**[www.summerschools.de](http://www.summerschools.de)**

There are many other institutions which offer German courses as well. These include the Goethe-Institut in Germany (**[www.goethe.de](http://www.goethe.de)**) and adult education centres (**[www.volkshochschule.de](http://www.volkshochschule.de)**), as well as many other, mainly privately funded language schools. Fees are charged for these courses, however.

A good place to start looking for courses and schools is the database offered by the Association for German as a Foreign Language (FaDaF): **[www.fadaf.de/de/daf\\_angebote/sprachkursangebote](http://www.fadaf.de/de/daf_angebote/sprachkursangebote)**.

The traditional (and often expensive) language courses are not the only way to learn German. Have you ever considered finding a language partner? In a **language partnership**, two people get together and teach each other their native language. They meet on a regular basis and practice speaking in one language and then the other.

International Offices and international student organisations often have lists or websites which help students find suitable tandem partners. You can also post a message on one of the many notice boards on campus, saying that you'd like to find a language partner.

You might also find a tandem partner online – for example, on your university's Facebook page.

## Test: How good is my German?

The levels for language courses in Germany are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (see infobox on p. 23).

If you are interested in assessing your knowledge of German, then you can test yourself. To take a free test, visit the Goethe-Institut website **[www.goethe.de/einstufungstest](http://www.goethe.de/einstufungstest)**.

If you would like to have your language level assessed more precisely and also require a certificate, you can take the onDaF test for a fee (**[www.ondaf.de](http://www.ondaf.de)**). The test can also tell you whether your level is sufficient for the TestDaF.



## 3.3

# Gaining work experience during your studies



In this section we tell you how you can gain experience on the German labour market through part-time work and internships – and what you have to be aware of.

Perhaps you wish to take advantage of your time studying in Germany to gain some work experience in the German labour market. Part-time jobs and internships offer a perfect opportunity to do this. Above all, working is a good way to make professional contacts.

And, of course, a part-time job can help you earn some extra money. Keep in mind, however, there is no guarantee you will find a part-time job in Germany, and if you do, you probably won't earn enough to cover all your living expenses. German labour laws restrict how many hours foreign students are allowed to work.

### What kind of part-time jobs are available to students?

Working at an institute, library or other facility at your university would be an ideal way to enhance your university experience, for instance, as a student assistant or research associate. You can find such job openings posted on your university's website.

Waiting tables at cafés or pubs is traditionally popular among students, as well. Other students find work at copy shops, assist visitors at trade fairs, drive delivery trucks, work as cycle couriers, housekeepers, babysitters, etc.

If you are looking for a job, check the notices and help-wanted ads on the *Schwarzes Brett* at your university, in libraries, supermarkets, etc. Many universities offer a job-finding service for students. Contact your Studentenwerk or the local employment agency for more information.

### More information?

[www.daad.de/job](http://www.daad.de/job)

## How much am I allowed to work?

There are labour laws that precisely stipulate how many hours students are allowed to work. The regulations vary according to where the students come from.

### ► Are you a citizen of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland (Group 1)?

You may work as much as you'd like without any additional permit. However, like German students, you should not work more than 20 hours a week during the semester. If you do, you will have to pay into social security.

### ► Are you a citizen from a country not listed above (Group 2)?

You are only allowed to work up to 120 full days or 240 half days in a year. Those who wish to work more require a work permit from the Federal Employment Agency and the Aliens' Registration Office. Whether you are issued a work permit largely depends on the condition of the job market in your city. You are less likely to receive a permit in regions with higher unemployment rates.

If you have a student job on campus or work as a research assistant, it's usually no problem to exceed the 120-day limit. However, you must notify the Aliens' Registration Office if you do.

Please note: The labour laws pertaining to international students are very restrictive, and if you break them, you risk being expelled from the country.

Self-employment and freelance work is generally not permitted.

If you are attending a language course or foundation course, you may work during the semester breaks, but only with the explicit permission of the Aliens' Registration Office and the Federal Employment Agency.

Internships are regarded as regular employment. This applies even when the internship is unpaid. Every day of your internship is subtracted from your 120-day employment credit. And if you have already worked the full 120 days and wish to take an internship, you will have to apply for an additional work permit from the Aliens' Registration Office and the Federal Employment Agency.





### *I still benefit ...*

*from the professional experience I gained during my studies in Göttingen. In the second year of my master's programme, I completed a traineeship at the Literarisches Zentrum in Göttingen. I had to be very disciplined to work part-time during my studies. But I learned so much from this work in literary management. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have gotten my present job without this valuable experience. The contacts I made during the traineeship are still very important for me – and not only professionally. The friendships I made there still mean very much to me.*

**Annie Rutherford** comes from Scotland. She completed her master's degree programme in General and Comparative Literature at the University of Göttingen. Today she works as the programme coordinator of Scotland's international poetry festival "StAnza".

There is, however, an exception to this rule. An internship is not regarded as regular employment if it is required by your degree programme (mandatory internship). No permission is necessary for mandatory internships and they are not subtracted from your 120-day employment credit.

### **More information?**

**[www.daad.de/deutschland/download](http://www.daad.de/deutschland/download)**

Information leaflet on employment in Germany for foreign students

You can find the address of the branch office of the Federal Employment Agency in your university town at:

**[www.arbeitsagentur.de](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de)**



## What are the benefits of an internship?

Many students take advantage of internships to gain practical, professional experience during their education. Becoming acquainted with working life helps many people make decisions concerning their own professional orientation. Some students use their work experience to concentrate on certain areas of interest in their studies. Internships also allow students to make contacts outside of the university environment.

Internships are mandatory in many degree programmes and are supervised by university instructors. In some cases, students must complete an internship before they can enter a degree programme (see p. 21).

You can complete an internship at a company or organisation. Internships usually last a few weeks to several months.

If you wish to complete an internship while studying in Germany, you can contact the following offices or organisations:

- The internship office at your university
- International Office
- An international student organisation, such as AIESEC, ELSA (see p. 62) and IAESTE ([www.iaeste.de](http://www.iaeste.de))

## More information?

[www.daad.de/job](http://www.daad.de/job)

## How much money can I earn?

As of the beginning of 2015, all employees in Germany are guaranteed a minimum hourly wage of 8.50 euros. The law stipulates that even students must earn at least this amount when working part-time jobs.

When it comes to internships, the minimum wage does not always apply. For mandatory internships, employers are not obliged to pay the minimum wage. And for voluntary internships, students only qualify for the minimum wage if their internship lasts longer than three months. Otherwise, such internships are generally unpaid or negligibly compensated.

## 3.4

# Finding employment after graduation

In this section we help you assess your chances of living and working in Germany after you finish your studies – and what laws and regulations apply.

Perhaps you like Germany so much that you're thinking about staying here after graduation. And you might be wondering how to enter the German labour market and apply the knowledge and qualifications you've gained during your studies.

If this is your wish, you are certainly not alone. About 40 percent of international graduates decide to stay (at least temporarily) in Germany after completing their studies.

### What laws and regulations apply to foreign workers?

Special regulations apply to foreign graduates of German universities. Generally speaking, if you have a German university degree and fulfil certain requirements, you will find it easier to obtain a residence permit with the right to engage in gainful employment.

After concluding your studies in Germany, you can apply for a residence permit valid for up to 18 months for the purpose of seeking employment. To be eligible, you have to demonstrate that you can cover

your costs of living and that you are serious about seeking employment which corresponds to your level of academic qualification. While looking for a permanent position, you are allowed to work part-time for as many hours per week as you wish.

If you succeed in finding a job within this time, you are allowed to stay in Germany.

### EU Blue Card

The EU Blue Card is intended for citizens of non-EU countries. The card grants highly-qualified individuals permission to live and work in Germany.

Anyone can apply for an EU Blue Card if they have a (German or recognised foreign) university degree and an employment contract with a gross annual income of at least 49,600 euros. For some professions (e. g. scientists, mathematicians, engineers, doctors and IT specialists) an annual gross income of 38,688 euros is sufficient.

**More information?**  
[www.bluecard-eu.de](http://www.bluecard-eu.de)



### *I was thrilled ...*

*spending my holidays as a pupil in Germany. Even back then I knew I wanted to come back and study here. My degree programme was extremely well-structured, but I still had a lot of freedom. That's how I've found life in Germany too – well structured, safe and free. And that's why I'm still very happy to be here. Not only do I receive high-quality specialist training, but also the chance to conduct my own research.*

**Antonis Nicolaides** comes from Cyprus and studied Medicine at the Hannover Medical School. Today he works at the Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine at the University Hospital in Dresden.

You can have your residence permit converted to one for the purpose of engaging in gainful employment.

There is one stipulation, however – your new position must correspond to your university degree. In other words, you have to find a job that has something to do with what you've actually studied. Furthermore, you may not be overqualified for the position. For example, in the first case, a graduate who studied Medicine is not suited for a job as a computer programmer. In the second case, a graduate who studied

Art History is overqualified to take a job waiting tables at a museum café.

If specific conditions are met, you may apply for a permanent residence permit (*Niederlassungserlaubnis*) after only two years of qualified employment. After eight years of legal residence in Germany, you are eligible for German citizenship if you fulfil certain requirements (for example, knowledge of German). In most German states, the time you spent studying in Germany also counts toward the eight-year residence period.



## Where do I have good chances of finding a job?

Despite that regulations have been simplified for foreign graduates, it is not always easy to find the right job. But there is good news for all job-seeking university graduates: German corporations are looking for highly qualified candidates.

According to a recent survey by the Cologne Institute for Economic Research, Germany especially lacks academics in so-called STEM disciplines, i. e. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. So depending on the branch, university graduates have a very good chance of finding a job in Germany!

As you look for employment, there is something important you should know about the German economy: small and medium-sized businesses (companies with less than 500 employees) play a vital role in the country and are regarded as Germany's job motor.

In 2014, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) accounted for 99.3 percent of Germany's companies. A total of 60 percent of all jobs in Germany are provided by 2.5 million SMEs. Therefore, in addition to considering large, internationally active companies, you can significantly increase your chances of finding work if you also consider positions in such small- to mid-sized enterprises.

## The online portal for international specialists

### **[www.make-it-in-germany.com](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com)**

provides information and consultation to international professionals who wish to live and work in Germany. Not only does the website offer extensive information for job hunters, but also a job exchange.

## How good does my German have to be?

The important thing to keep in mind is that your chances of finding a job in Germany are significantly higher if you can speak German well. Perhaps you studied at a German university but didn't need much German – for example, if you were in an English-language master's degree programme.

On the German market, however, most companies insist on very good German skills. Perhaps the only exceptions are positions offered at research institutes and large, international corporations. Excellent English skills can make up for some of the deficits in German language ability.

Take advantage of every opportunity to learn more German and improve your language skills – during your studies and afterwards (see pp. 64–66).

# Good luck!

Studying in Germany is not only an exciting challenge, but also an important step on your career path.

Many international students complete their studies in Germany every year. Just in 2014, more than 43,671 international students earned a university degree. With a bachelor's or master's degree in their pocket, they have the best chances for launching an international career.

For many students, Germany becomes a home away from home. And most of them maintain a close relationship to Germany for the rest of their lives. And with any luck, you might become one of them!

We wish you all the best!

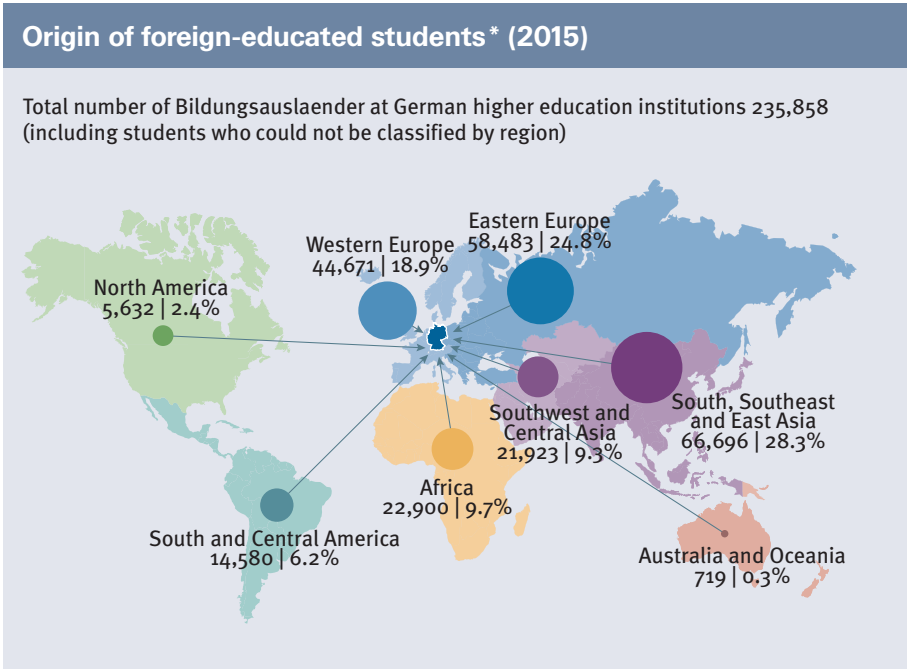
### Further reading

We encourage you to visit **[www.daad.de/deutschland/nach-deutschland](http://www.daad.de/deutschland/nach-deutschland)** where you can find numerous DAAD publications with extensive information for international students.

## Appendix

# Facts and figures – International students in Germany

Students at German universities (2015)	
German students	2,377,341
International students	321,569
German-educated *	85,711
foreign-educated *	235,858
Total students	2,698,910

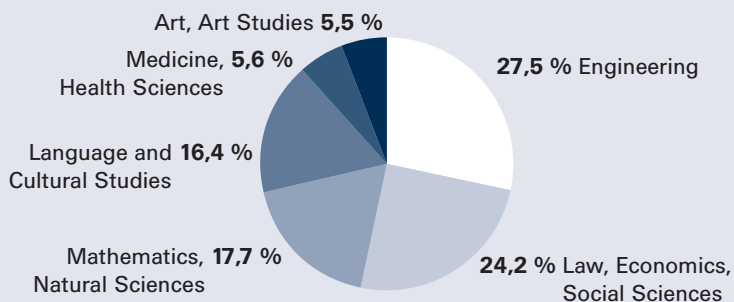




### The Top 15 countries of origin (2015)

	Number		Number
China	30,259	Cameroon	6,672
India	11,655	Ukraine	6,645
Russian Federation	11,534	Poland	6,165
Austria	9,875	Iran	5,916
France	7,305	Spain	5,746
Italy	7,169	South Korea	4,838
Turkey	6,785	USA	4,728
Bulgaria	6,739		

### The 6 most popular subject groups studied by foreign-educated students (2015)



\* International students are comprised of **German-educated** (*Bildungsinländer*) and **foreign-educated** (*Bildungsaufländer*) students.

**German-educated** students have received their higher education entrance qualification in Germany or in a German School abroad, **foreign-educated** students at a foreign school.

The figures above were taken from the DAAD publication "Wissenschaft weltweit 2016" and are based on the 2015 academic year. Additional sources include official university statistics and the Social Survey by the Deutsches Studentenwerk.

# About the DAAD

“Change by exchange” is the motto and primary goal of the DAAD. Since 1925, the DAAD has helped young academics gain international experience around the world. Awarding scholarships is just one of the many facets of its diverse programme. The DAAD promotes internationalisation at German universities, strengthens German Studies and the German language abroad and helps developing countries establish more efficient universities. The DAAD is an important German foreign policy partner in matters of culture, science, education and development.

The DAAD is comprised of a vibrant community of committed individuals. In addition to scholarship holders and alumni, who return home with experience from Germany and cultivate contacts for years to come, the DAAD depends on academics, whose expert opinions serve as the basis for decisions on scholarship applications and project proposals. Specially appointed students and graduates from German universities incorporate their perspectives into the work of the DAAD. And naturally, there is the global network of DAAD employees, many of whom received grants or lectureships themselves and benefited from the opportunity of international experience.

Today, the German Academic Exchange Service is the world’s largest funding organisation of its kind. It is strongly devoted to internationalising the German research and educational sector. Thanks to its efforts, Germany has become more tolerant and open-minded – and certainly more competitive in a globalised world. In 2015, a total of 238 member universities and 107 student governing bodies belonged to the DAAD.

## Budget

The budget of the DAAD is mainly financed through public revenues from various ministries, in particular, the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The European Union is now the organisation’s third largest financial backer. Additional financing is provided by companies, organisations and foreign governments. In 2015, the DAAD oversaw a total budget of 471 million euros, an increase of seven percent from the previous year.

## The DAAD and its Goals

In 2015, over 250 DAAD programmes supported more than 127,000 Germans and foreigners around the world. These programmes awarded study-abroad scholarships and PhD fellowships to young academics and researchers, funded internships and guest lectureships, allowed citizens from developing countries to participate in postgraduate degree programmes, and even established new universities abroad. The DAAD also supports the internationalisation activities of German universities through marketing campaigns, publications, events and continuing education courses.

The DAAD pursues three main courses of action to ensure that it continues achieving its goals in the future:

### 1. Scholarships for the Best:

Awarding scholarships to the best German and international students and researchers who, in a demanding application process, demonstrate exceptional ability and willingness to accept responsibility

### 2. Structures for Internationalisation:

Creating higher education structures in Germany and abroad (e. g. international degree programmes, bilaterally founded universities, academic networks, etc.) which promote international qualification, mobility and dialogue which, in turn, improves the quality of research and instruction

### 3. Expertise for Academic Collaborations:

Systematising, developing and providing expertise in educational cultures and systems of higher learning, which the DAAD has gained through its work and network and which is essential for developing internationally successful collaborations

### Related links

#### Extensive information on studying in Germany

[www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de)  
[www.daad.de/deutschland](http://www.daad.de/deutschland)

#### Degree programmes

[www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de)  
[www.hochschulkompass.de](http://www.hochschulkompass.de)  
[www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes)  
[www.studienwahl.de](http://www.studienwahl.de)  
[www.universityranking.de](http://www.universityranking.de)

#### Admissions

[www.daad.de/admission](http://www.daad.de/admission)  
<http://anabin.kmk.org>

#### Applying to German universities

[www.uni-assist.de](http://www.uni-assist.de)  
[www.hochschulstart.de](http://www.hochschulstart.de)

#### Visas

[www.diplo.de/visa](http://www.diplo.de/visa)

#### Scholarships and funding programmes

[www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de)  
[eu.daad.de](http://eu.daad.de)

#### Learning German

[www.summerschools.de](http://www.summerschools.de)  
[www.goethe.de](http://www.goethe.de)

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