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Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

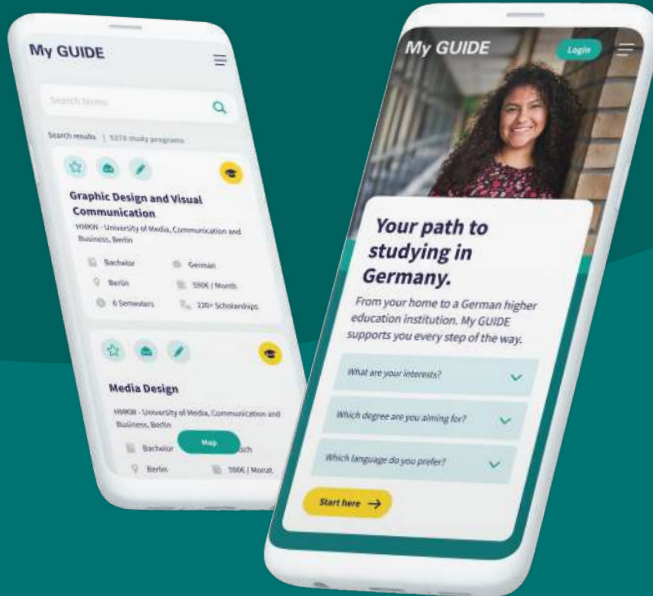
# Studying in Germany

A Practical Guide for  
International Students



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## Studying in Germany?



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Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

# **Studying in Germany**

**A Practical Guide for International Students**

**8th edition**

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# SO YOU WANT TO STUDY IN GERMANY? WE CAN'T WAIT TO MEET YOU!

Studying in another country is always an exciting project but it is challenging, too. You're leaving behind your familiar surroundings to go and live in a different country with a different culture.

In Germany you will find a wide range of opportunities to study in cities large and small. Germany's higher education institutions enjoy an outstanding reputation around the world and are recognised for the strength of their research. On top of this, they offer great conditions for study. What's more, the costs are low when compared to other countries around the world. If you're interested in a PhD, Germany's many internationally recognised research institutions offer excellent opportunities.

In addition to this, there is currently a very good chance of being able to remain in Germany after you graduate. Germany is looking for skilled professionals, and it is easier to get a long-term residence permit if you have graduated from a study programme in Germany.

There are currently more international students in Germany than almost any other country. The current figure is around 350,000, about 12% of all students in Germany – so you'll be in good company!

Any period of study abroad requires a lot of preparation, and we hope this brochure helps you with that. Of course, it can't answer every individual question, so why not get in touch with our teams in the DAAD's offices around the world when making your plans? They are very experienced and will be happy to help you make the best possible preparations for your stay in Germany.

And even if right now everything looks pretty complicated and hard work, don't forget that studying abroad is an experience which you'll remember for your whole life. Years from now you will look back on your time abroad and still benefit from it.

**We'd like to wish you all success and a wonderful, exciting time in Germany!**

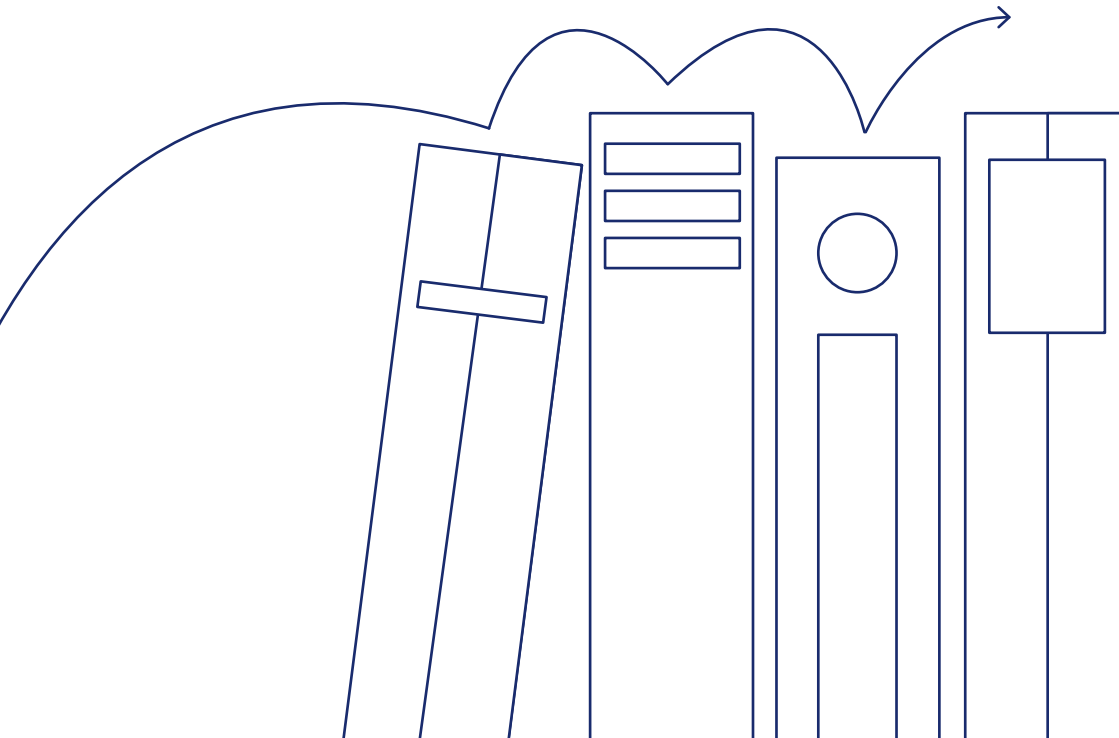




## WHAT IS THE DAAD?

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is the organisation of German higher education institutions and their student bodies. In addition to awarding scholarships, the DAAD also promotes the internationalisation of German universities, as well as strengthening German studies and the German language abroad. The DAAD also helps developing countries create efficient higher education institutions. It also advises policy-makers on the areas of foreign science, education and development.

In addition to this, the DAAD provides a wide range of information about studying and living in Germany for prospective students. You can find this information at → [www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/](http://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/), → [www.study-in-germany.de/en/](http://www.study-in-germany.de/en/) and → [www.myguide.de/en/](http://www.myguide.de/en/). We also provide brochures on these topics which you can find in the DAAD's offices around the world and online.



# 1 PREPARATIONS BEFORE STARTING YOUR STUDIES

Just going away on holiday requires a good deal of planning and organisation. That's all the more true if you want to study in another country. You will need a good basic understanding of the higher education system, the study programmes on offer, and how to apply. You will also need to know about some bureaucratic points.

In this chapter we will explain what you need to know about starting your studies in Germany. You will find out about the different types of higher education institutions in Germany, the different study opportunities they offer and how to get started. In addition to this, you will learn about the requirements you need to meet in order to study in Germany. We will also explain some of the technical and administrative questions you need to clarify in advance and how to start looking for accommodation before you even arrive in Germany.

You can also find these points in a checklist at the end of the chapter, along with advice on the best time to deal with each of the points. This will help you keep track of everything and stay on schedule, and ensure you have all the documents you need for your departure.

By following these steps, nothing should get in the way of making a successful start to studying in Germany!

## 1.1 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GERMANY

Every country's higher education system is different, so in this chapter, we will explain the different types of higher education institutions in Germany and the different ways they are funded.

### EDUCATION POLICY

Education policy in Germany is set by the federal states. This means that Germany doesn't have one single higher education system: it has 16, one for each federal state, but the systems are similar. However, the types of higher education institutions do not differ between the federal states. Nevertheless, you should find out the specific requirements for your chosen higher education institution.



Germany has over 420 higher education institutions spread across the whole country.



### Types of higher education institutions and their features

Germany's 420 or so higher education institutions include almost 120 universities, over 200 universities of applied sciences and just under 60 institutions for music and the arts. In addition to these, there are over 30 colleges of public administration and a small number of institutions which specialise in single areas such as marketing or medicine. How do these various institutions differ from one another?

**Universities** have a strong focus on research and their study programmes are academically oriented. Most universities offer a wide range of subjects, although there are some specialist institutions such as technical universities, medical universities and colleges of education. What they all have in common is the right to award doctoral degrees. So if you want to do your PhD in Germany you should take a close look at the universities here.

However, if a more practice-oriented education appeals to you, **universities of applied sciences** might be of interest. They generally offer study programmes which are more focused on practical applications, and work placements are usually a core element of the curriculum. The subjects they offer are often more application-oriented than those offered by universities and are mainly in the fields of technology and engineering or economics and social sciences. On the other hand, there are also some specialist institutions such as technical universities of

applied sciences which have grown strongly in number over recent years.

**Colleges of music and the arts** also include colleges of film, media and similar institutions. If you want to study at one of these institutions, you will need artistic talent and will usually have to pass a separate entrance examination.

**Colleges of public administration** train Germany's civil servants. **Non-standard higher education institutions** include dual higher education institutions for degree programmes with vocational and academic elements.

### Public or private funding

One distinctive feature of Germany's higher education system is that many institutions are publicly funded. Around two-thirds of all higher education institutions are public bodies which are funded by the state. The state also recognises over 110 private universities and just under 40 church-funded institutions.

What does this mean for you? You do not usually pay tuition fees at public higher education institutions. Instead, you pay a fee each semester. These are generally between €170 and €450, which is very low compared to many other countries. On the other hand, private institutions and some church institutions do charge tuition fees, but the levels range widely. Some are as low as €500 per semester, while others can be up to €15,000. The average is roughly €3,500.





## HISTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Ruprecht Karls University in Heidelberg is the oldest university in Germany. It was established in 1386 and houses the oldest university library in the country. Universities of applied sciences are much younger. The first of these were set up in the late 1960s, although many were based on much older predecessors, such as colleges of engineering and higher technical colleges for specific subject areas.

In addition to these institutions, there are other private or church institutions which are not recognised by the state. Degrees awarded by these institutions may be less valuable on the international job market. You should check in advance whether your desired institution is recognised by the state. A quick tip: all institutions listed in the Higher Education Compass ([www.daad.de/study-programmes](http://www.daad.de/study-programmes)) are recognised by the state.

## Student numbers in Germany

Around 2.9 million students were enrolled at higher education institutions in Germany in the 2022/2023 winter semester. The majority (1.7 million) study at universities. Universities of applied sciences have 1.1 million students, and colleges of art and music have just under 38,000 students.

A clear majority of students in Germany are enrolled at public higher education institutions. About 12% chose to study at private institutions.

And around 12% of all students come from abroad. There are around 350,000 international students in Germany.

350,000 international students in Germany



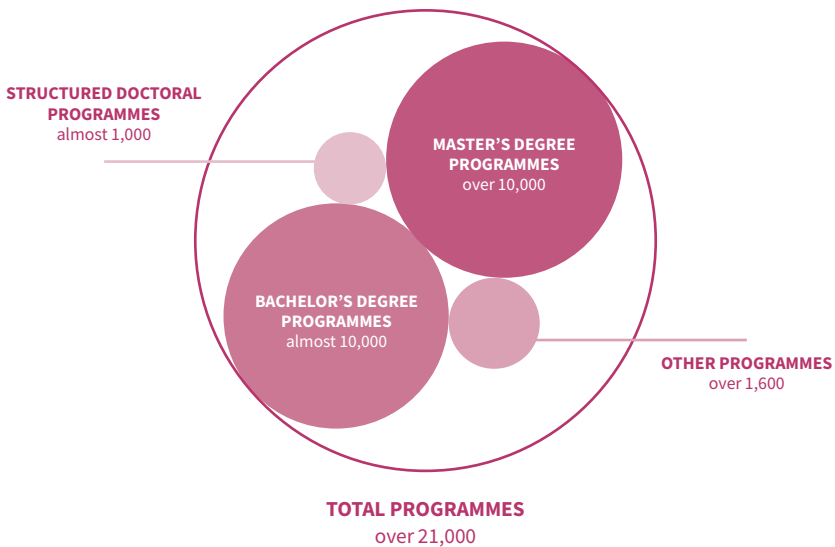
## STUDENT AGES

The average student in Germany is 23 years old, but there are outliers above and below this. For example, the youngest student in Germany now has not even reached the age of 15! Generally, very few people under the age of 18 are in higher education in Germany. There are currently fewer than 5,000 such students. By contrast, in certain subjects you may be more likely to meet students of retirement age. It is estimated that there are around 55,000 such students. They are often found in subjects like history and philosophy, but less commonly in technical study programmes.

## 1.2 STUDY PROGRAMMES AND DEGREES IN GERMANY

Regardless of whether you are just starting out in higher education or already are well underway, you will find programmes and degrees in Germany which fit your interests. There is a lot of choice, and you will need to consider many things when making your decision. We can help you get where you want to go.

### HOW MANY STUDY PROGRAMMES ARE THERE IN GERMANY?



## The most popular degrees in Germany

If you have just completed your school education, a **bachelor's degree** programme is the right next step for you. There are different types of bachelor's degrees: the most common are Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees, which are often awarded for programmes in the social sciences, economics and languages. You can achieve a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in science subjects, while BEng degrees are common in engineering subjects. Bachelor's degree programmes generally take between six and eight semesters to complete, at the end of which you will have your initial professional qualification. It will allow you to enter the employment market or continue your academic education with a master's degree.

The most common **master's degrees** are Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc) and Master of Engineering (MEng). To be accepted onto a master's degree programme you will generally need a bachelor's degree, usually in a relevant subject. A master's degree allows you to explore the fundamentals you learned in your bachelor's degree in greater depth. These programmes generally last between two and four semesters, after which you can get off to a flying start in your career or continue onto a PhD.

After completing your master's degree, you can go on to study for a **Doctorate/PhD**. In a PhD you conduct research into an academic problem or issue, and publish your findings in a thesis, known in Germany as

a 'Promotion'. Depending on your research topic and subject area, you will need between two and five years to complete a PhD.

## Doctoral/PhD programmes: Procedure and information sources

In Germany there are two different models for a PhD: individual PhDs and structured PhDs. The traditional model is the **individual PhD**. In this model, you find your own supervisor for your PhD project independently. They supervise your work and support you throughout your PhD. Your supervisor is known as a 'Doktorvater' or 'Doktormutter' – a doctoral father or mother – in Germany. Under their mentorship, you then work fairly independently on your project and are free to structure work as you wish.

The other model is a **structured PhD**. For a structured PhD you apply to a PhD programme such as a research training group or graduate school. There, you work on your PhD within a prescribed structure.

Both routes have their pros and cons. In an individual PhD you have greater freedom, both in terms of time and your subject matter. However, you also have to work more independently than in a structured programme, where you often collaborate with other doctoral students. Before starting, think about which option is a better fit for your personality and way of working.

You can find more information about PhD opportunities in Germany at:

- [www.daad.de/phd](http://www.daad.de/phd)
- [www.research-in-germany.org](http://www.research-in-germany.org)
- [www.hochschulkompass.de/en/doctoral-studies](http://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/doctoral-studies)

You can research calls for applications to PhD programmes on the following websites:

- [www.phdgermany.de](http://www.phdgermany.de)
- [www.hochschulkompass.de/en/doctoral-studies](http://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/doctoral-studies)
- [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes) (international PhDs)



**TIP:** For international PhD programmes, take a look at the International Max Planck research Schools (IMPRS) run by the Max Planck Institutes in Germany. There are 68 IMPRS, where German and international PhD students work together and the working language is English. Further information is available via → [www.mpg.de/en/imprs](http://www.mpg.de/en/imprs).

There are some other types of degrees in Germany which will probably be unfamiliar to you. These are the **state examination**, **'Diploma'** and **'Magister'** degrees. Nowadays, Diploma and Magister degrees are only awarded occasionally, mainly in engineering, arts subjects and theology. By contrast, the state examination is in widespread use. Students of law, medicine and pharmacy receive this degree, as do trainee teachers. If you are working towards one of these degrees, you should make absolutely sure in advance that they will be recognised in your home country.

### Orchid subjects in Germany

Have you ever heard of orchid subjects? They have nothing to do with botany. Orchid subjects are study programmes which are only offered at a few higher education institutions in Germany and are therefore considered exotic. What about a bachelor's degree in applied leisure studies or equine studies? Or a master's degree in papyrology, caucasology or onomastics? You won't find packed lecture theatres in these subjects, and they are guaranteed to give you something to talk about at parties.





### Studying if you don't speak German: international study programmes

What if you want to study in Germany, but you don't have the necessary language skills? An **international study programme** could be right for you. English is usually the main language of teaching for these programmes and you can often apply even if you cannot speak German well. In addition, these programmes usually offer additional support for international students. Their curricula also often include international elements such as international guest lecturers or projects and language courses which can help you get the hang of life in Germany.

You can find many of the international study programmes currently offered in Germany in the DAAD's database of international bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes ([www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes)). The database contains entries on some 290 bachelor's programmes, over 1,400 master's programmes and around 180 structured doctoral programmes.

### Studying in different countries on a joint or dual degree programme

If you don't want to spend the whole of your studies in Germany and want to get to know more countries, have a look at programmes which include **international double degrees**. For these you will only spend part of your standard period of study in Germany, and the remainder of your time will be at a higher education institution abroad. You get

two degrees from programmes like this: one from the higher education institution in Germany and one from the institution abroad. There are currently around 850 of these programmes in Germany, including 290 bachelor's degree and 550 master's degree programmes.

### Get a German degree without studying in Germany: hybrid and online study programmes

Distance learning study programmes are not unusual in Germany. There are even some institutions where you cannot study in person at all. During the pandemic, Germany's higher education institutions expanded their **hybrid and online provision**. Now you can choose from over 1,000 online and hybrid programmes.

There is a wide range of options. For some programmes you never have to travel to Germany, and you can even sit examinations digitally. However, most programmes include some periods where you have to come to Germany. These could be individual days per week or a few weeks a year, but it could also only be for examinations. You will need to check carefully to see how each programme is organised.

The ways the course content is taught can also vary widely. In some programmes you can study without any restrictions at all on when and where you study. The course provides the content and you can then work on it whenever you want. For other programmes

the content is taught live. That means that a live video feed or chat will take place at a certain time. If you live in a different time zone to Germany, that can be pretty hard work, as you may sometimes need to join a session in the middle of the night.

When it comes down to it, there are pros and cons to all distance learning options. One advantage is that you can get an internationally

recognised degree from a German university without having to move away from where you live. That means you will not have to find new accommodation or be apart from your family. However, you would miss out on the cultural experiences of studying abroad.

What if you don't want to complete a full study programme in Germany and just want to spend one or two semesters abroad?



**TIP:** What happens if you have been accepted on an in-person course in Germany, but your visa has not arrived yet? Make sure to check if your study programme offers individual elements in hybrid form. Hybrid options allow you to choose whether to study in person at the higher education institution or digitally from elsewhere. In such cases you can therefore start digitally and then continue your studies in person at a later point once you have received your visa.

Check out **partner programmes with German higher education institutions** through your home institution's international office. If your home institution is in an EU country or a third country which is associated with the programme, Erasmus+ is an incredible opportunity to spend some time abroad. You can find more detailed information at [eu.daad.de](http://eu.daad.de).

### Choosing the right city

Of course your choice of programme and higher education institution is important, but you need to like the city and it needs to fit your priorities. Are you more of a big city person, or do you love small-town tranquillity? Do you enjoy bracing sea air in the north or is your heart in the mountains? Take a look around 100 cities in Germany with higher education institutions at [www.study-in-germany.de/en/germany/cities/](http://www.study-in-germany.de/en/germany/cities/).



## USEFUL LINKS

- Higher Education Compass (→ [www.daad.de/study-programmes](http://www.daad.de/study-programmes)): Information on over 21,000 study programmes in Germany
- International Programmes in Germany (→ [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes)): information on around 2,000 international study programmes and short stays in Germany
- My GUIDE (→ [www.myguide.de/en/](http://www.myguide.de/en/)) : Portal for study programmes where users can log in to review individual access options and contact higher education institutions directly
- Study in Germany: Information on the German higher education system (→ [www.study-in-germany.de/en/plan-your-studies/study-options/higher-education-system/](http://www.study-in-germany.de/en/plan-your-studies/study-options/higher-education-system/))
- → [studienwahl.de/en](http://studienwahl.de/en): official study guide for Germany

## 1.3 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND HOW TO APPLY

To be able to study in Germany you have to demonstrate that you hold certain qualifications. Often you need to provide proof of your German language skills. However, if you lack anything, there are services to help you fill in any gaps. What if you aren't sure if you meet all the formal requirements? Here, too there are services to help you prepare and test yourself. And when you are ready to apply, it's a good idea to know in advance how it works. We'll explain it all in this chapter.

### School-leaving qualifications for German higher education institutions

If you want to study at a German higher education institution, you will need a **higher education entrance qualification**. In Germany, these qualifications are called the Abitur and the Fachabitur. An Abitur allows you to apply for any subject at any university, while a Fachabitur allows you to study a more limited range of subjects. Your school-leaving qualifications must be equivalent to one of these two qualifications.

So how can you find out if your qualifications are considered equivalent?

If you have school-leaving qualifications from Switzerland or a country in the European Economic Area (EEA), it's really easy. If your qualifications will get you into

higher education at home, they will generally be adequate for higher education in Germany. If you have an Abitur from a German school abroad (regardless of whether it is in the EU or not), that qualifies you for higher education in Germany.

It becomes a little more complicated if you are not from Switzerland or an EEA country, and did not attend a German school. In that case, you will need to check your individual circumstances. The DAAD provides several tools on its website to help you do that, **including the admissions database** ([www.daad.de/admission-database](http://www.daad.de/admission-database)). With just a few clicks, you can find out if your qualifications

- satisfy the requirements to study any subject (also known as ‘direct general university admission’),
- allow you to study a restricted range of subjects (also known as ‘subject-restricted admission’),
- require that you study for one or two years in your home country before you can start studying in Germany, or
- are not adequate to study in higher education in Germany.

The DAAD **My GUIDE** ([www.myguide.de/en/](http://www.myguide.de/en/)) portal offers similar assistance. My GUIDE provides a non-binding eligibility check and will show you the study programmes for which you can apply with your qualifications, which cuts out one stage of the research process for you. You can also

contact individual higher education institutions directly through My GUIDE.

These tools are for information only, and the higher education institution will make the final decision. For this reason, you should always check with your desired higher education institution to make sure they recognise your qualifications.

You should be aware that different requirements can apply to artistic subjects. If you can demonstrate exceptional talent, you may sometimes be able to study even if you do not have a formal higher education entrance qualification. In these cases, too, the decision is up to the individual higher education institution.

### Access to higher education with non-equivalent qualifications

If your school-leaving qualifications are not eligible for study in Germany, you will need to take a **higher education entrance examination** known as the ‘Feststellungsprüfung’. This will test you on subjects which are relevant to your future subject area. Passing the test allows you to apply for a bachelor’s degree programme in that field of study. The Feststellungsprüfung also generally includes a language test.

Of course, you can take the Feststellungsprüfung without any extra preparation, but we do recommend attending a **preparatory course** in Germany known as a ‘Studienkolleg’. These courses generally take two semesters with around 30 hours of lessons a



**TIP:** You only need to take the Feststellungsprüfung if you are applying for a bachelor's programme. If you already hold a bachelor's degree and want to start a master's programme, you do not need to take the assessment. The same applies if you have a bachelor's degree from your home country.

week. Attending a course at a public higher education institution is free and you only have to pay the standard semester fees. Please note, if you want to attend a Studienkolleg, you will need to show you have good German skills (i.e. Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

### Testing your German language skills

Language is an important aspect when it comes to studying successfully in Germany, but how good do your German skills need to be?

This really depends on the specific requirements of the higher education institution

and study programme. You can take some international study programmes without knowing any German at all. However, most study programmes are still taught in German. You will need to prove you have good language skills when you apply so you can follow the lectures and seminars and complete your academic assignments.

Two different exams are available for you to demonstrate your German skills: the Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache (TestDaF) and the Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang (DSH). You can take the TestDaF exam at one of 500 test centres in 100 countries. The digital TestDaF exam can also only be taken at a test centre. The exam dates are published in advance and



## LANGUAGE SKILLS

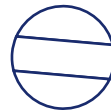
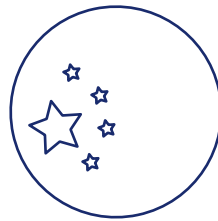
Over 80% of international students could speak German before they started studying. Even if it is not compulsory for your study programme, being able to speak German will make it easier to find your feet in Germany, both in the classroom and in your private life.



**TIP:** You can find out more about language certificates at → [www.sprachnachweis.de](http://www.sprachnachweis.de). Here, you can research the German skills which you will need for your chosen subject at the higher education institution you hope to attend. Sprachnachweis.de also gives you a great overview of the exams which you can take to demonstrate your German skills.

can be found at [www.testdaf.de](http://www.testdaf.de). On the other hand, DSH exams are mainly offered by higher education institutions and Studienkollegs in Germany. The exam dates can be found at [dsh.de/dsh-dates](http://dsh.de/dsh-dates), but you should also check with the international office of your higher education institution in Germany. Both tests are available at different levels of difficulty, but you will need to achieve at least level B2.2 to be able to apply for any study programme without restrictions.

You will have to pay a fee to take the tests. Find out the fees which will apply to you, as they vary from country to country and from institution to institution.



## LANGUAGE COURSES IN GERMANY

One good way to improve or refresh your language skills before starting your studies is to take a language course in Germany. Many higher education institutions offer a range of courses from German for beginners to courses for advanced learners. Some focus on specific topics while others offer more general information about the country and its culture. Check out the courses which are currently available at → [www.summerschools.de](http://www.summerschools.de).

However, you do not need to provide evidence of your German skills if any of the following points apply to you:

- You hold an Abitur from a German-language school.
- You have passed the new Goethe-Zertifikat C2: Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom exam.
- You hold a level II Deutsches Sprachdiplom der Kultusministerkonferenz.
- You have passed the telc Deutsch C1 Hochschule exam

### Find out more about language skills

German skills are measured using the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR. CEFR categorises language users into three broad levels:

**Level A** – basic user

**Level B** – independent user

**Level C** – proficient user

Each of these levels is subdivided into 1 and 2. For example, someone with level A1 skills can only use and understand everyday expressions and very basic phrases. Someone with skills at level C2, on the other hand, can speak the language almost as well as a native speaker.

### Other ways of preparing to start your studies in Germany

Even if you meet all the formal requirements to study in Germany, you might still be feeling a little uncertain. Is your German good enough for higher education, for example? Do you have the specialist academic knowledge you need to be successful in your studies in Germany?

If you are worried about any of these issues, you can take a **preparatory course** known as a 'Propädeutikum'. Participating in one of these programmes will not only allow you to complete a language course but also prepare for the academic side of your future study programme. They also often include an introduction to the German higher education system and academic work. Propädeutika come in many different shapes and sizes. Some only take a few weeks while others run for one or even two semesters. The DAAD's International Programmes in Germany database includes a summary of selected Propädeutika. Go to [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes) and select Prep Course under course type.

If you want to test your skills for yourself, you can take the **Test for Academic Studies** (TestAS). Taking the test can give you a better idea of whether you can meet the requirements of a German higher education institution. Some institutions even require a TestAS as part of an application. It is always worth taking a close look at the entry requirements for your desired study



programme. You can find more information about TestAS at [www.testas.de/en/](http://www.testas.de/en/).

If you want to focus on testing your German skills, you can use the **Goethe-Institut's German self-test**. It is available at [www.goethe.de/en/spr/kup/tsd.html](http://www.goethe.de/en/spr/kup/tsd.html).

A range of other **self-tests** are available online which can help you choose which subject to study. The Studium-Interessentest ([www.hochschulkompass.de/studium-interessentest](http://www.hochschulkompass.de/studium-interessentest)) explores your interests around what to study and reveals your inclinations and talents, amongst other things.

The test is free, non-binding and only takes around 15 minutes. You can find plenty of other self-tests online, but probably not all deserve to be taken seriously. The Hochschulkompass website includes a selection of tried-and-tested options at [www.hochschulkompass.de/en/degree-programmes/choosing-a-programme/higher-education-orientation-tests.html](http://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/degree-programmes/choosing-a-programme/higher-education-orientation-tests.html). If you already know you want to study a technical subject, Self Assessment International is a good option for you. It is provided by the TU9 Alliance of leading universities of technology in Germany and can be accessed at [www.global-assess.rwth-aachen.de/tu9/tm](http://www.global-assess.rwth-aachen.de/tu9/tm).



**TIP:** It is quite common for individual higher education institutions or even individual faculties to offer online tests. If your chosen study programme offers one of these tests, it certainly cannot do any harm to take it.

You will need to set aside more time for the test, which takes between 90 and 120 minutes to complete.

Furthermore, don't be shy about taking advantage of **individual advice**. You can get in touch with the following offices and people:

- The DAAD's global network.
- The Lecturers that the DAAD sends out to higher education institutions abroad.
- The Goethe-Institut and Goethe Centres.
- Germany's diplomatic missions abroad, such as embassies and consulates.

In Germany itself, you can get advice and support from the international office of any higher education institution or the DAAD's headquarters in Bonn.

There are of course many websites which offer information about studying in Germany. One good starting-point is the Study in Germany – Land of Ideas campaign ([www.study-in-germany.de/en/](http://www.study-in-germany.de/en/)).

You can also access it via social media such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. You can find the links in the External Links section of the appendix to this brochure, listed under Support and advice.

## Ways to apply to study in Germany

First things first: each study programme has its own application process, and there is no single set of rules for the documents which you have to submit. So make sure you always carefully check the exact requirements of your chosen course! The following information can only give you a broad overview.

In Germany, some study programmes have few admission requirements, while others have much stricter requirements. These are known as 'zulassungsfrei' and 'zulassungsbeschränkt' study programmes respectively. The first step is to check which category your chosen study programme falls within.

**Study programmes with unrestricted admissions ('zulassungsfrei')**: In order to apply for an unrestricted admissions study programme, you need to meet the minimum requirements such as holding a higher education entrance qualification. If you meet these requirements, you can enrol directly with the higher education institution, although you may need to submit your application through uni-assist.

**Study programmes with restricted admissions ('zulassungsbeschränkt')**: With many study programmes in Germany there are more applications than places, so stricter admission requirements apply.

One common requirement is known as a 'Numerus Clausus' (NC), where you need to have achieved certain grades in your school leaving examinations or certificate.

Higher education institutions are allowed to set their own minimum grade requirements. In these cases, you would apply either to the institution directly or through uni-assist.

In addition to your grades, you might also be required to show evidence of work experience, an aptitude test or references for your application to be successful. Make sure you read through the exact requirements of the specific study programme.

In addition to this, admissions to some study programmes are subject to a single set of national regulations. These are study programmes in medicine, pharmacy, veterinary medicine and dentistry. As long as your school leaving qualifications are equivalent to those of German applicants, you apply for these subjects through Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung (Foundation for Higher Education Admission), [www.hochschulstart.de](http://www.hochschulstart.de). If you do not hold equivalent qualifications, you will need to apply to the higher education institution directly or through uni-assist for these study programmes. You can find more detailed information on the website of the Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung.

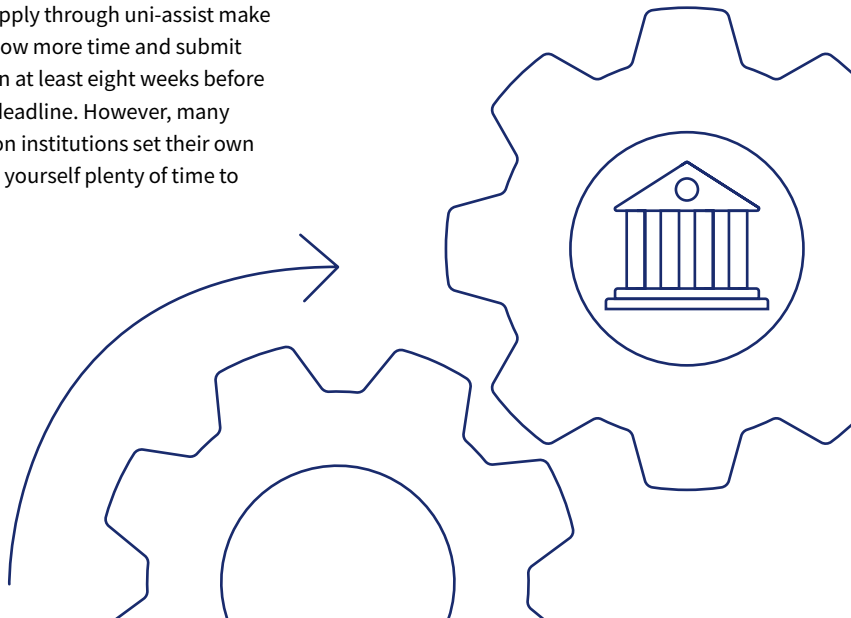


## WHAT IS UNI-ASSIST?

Many study programmes are subject to individual admission requirements. For these, certain international applications must be submitted to uni-assist. Uni-assist is a non-profit organisation which handles international study applications. They check your application for a fee. If it is in order, uni-assist sends your documents to the higher education institution. If anything is missing, they let you know so you can submit missing documents. Uni-assist makes life easier because you can apply for several study programmes at the same time. But the same advice applies here: always check carefully in advance how you should apply for your chosen study programme and whether you can apply through uni-assist.

The second stage of the process requires you to meet certain **application deadlines**, which often fall several months before the study programme actually starts. For many higher education institutions, the application period for the winter semester ends on 15 July. The application deadline for the summer semester often falls on 15 January. If you have to apply through uni-assist make extra sure to allow more time and submit your application at least eight weeks before the published deadline. However, many higher education institutions set their own deadlines. Give yourself plenty of time to

find out the deadlines which apply to your chosen study programme. Another important point is that with many study programmes, you can only apply for the winter semester.





## THE ACADEMIC YEAR IN GERMANY

The vast majority of higher education institutions in Germany divide the academic year into two semesters: the winter semester (known as 'WiSe') and the summer semester (known as 'SoSe'). Each semester includes the 'lecture period' when seminars and lectures take place. Between two semesters there is a 'lecture-free period', known as the 'semester break'. But these breaks aren't just holidays. There are often times when exams are held and there will be assignments waiting for your attention.

Each higher education institution sets its own dates for when semesters start. Please always find out the exact dates in advance from your chosen higher education institution. As a guideline, the following dates generally apply:

### 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

## WINTER SEMESTERS AROUND THE WORLD

In many parts of the world the winter semester begins in September. In Germany, most universities start in October. One of the only universities in Germany to adopt the international calendar is the University of Mannheim, where the winter semester begins in early September and ends before Christmas. The summer semester runs from February to June. The university therefore refers to its semesters as 'autumn' and 'spring' semesters.

Lastly, make sure that your **application is complete** by checking that you have included all the necessary documents. These generally include:

- Higher education entrance qualification certificate(s)
- Any university certificates or qualifications you have achieved so far
- Passport photo
- Passport
- Language proficiency certificate

Never submit original documents: only send copies. The copies must be officially certified to confirm their authenticity. You must also provide English or German translations of all documents, and the translations must also be officially certified. You can get documents officially certified at German embassies and consulates in your home country.

Submitting an application does come with some costs. For example, there are charges for getting copies and translations certified, and German language tests are not free. You may sometimes have to pay a processing fee which will vary according to the institution. Uni-assist, for example, charges a processing fee of €75 for your first-choice study programme. Each additional programme costs €30. In some cases the higher education institution will cover the uni-assist processing fees. You can find more information on this from uni-assist ([www.uni-assist.de/en/](http://www.uni-assist.de/en/)). The Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung does not charge a processing fee.

## REFUGEE STATUS IN GERMANY



In general terms, refugees can study at German higher education institutions. If you are a refugee and hold recognised status or have received a ‘Duldung’ (suspension of deportation), there are no problems with applying. It is even possible while proceedings are still ongoing. Otherwise, the same conditions apply to refugees as to other international students, although they can start a study programme even if they have no or incomplete documents.



## 1.4 ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: WHAT TO DO IN ADVANCE

Have you received your **letter of acceptance**? Congratulations! That means your application to a German higher education institution was successful. However, the letter of acceptance does not mean you are officially a student – yet. That happens when you enrol at your higher education institution. You will find the enrolment deadline on your letter of acceptance. If you applied for the winter semester, the letter of acceptance will be sent out in August or September. If you applied for the summer semester, you can expect it to arrive in February or March.



### ENROLMENT

Each higher education institution has its own rules on how future students must enrol. Some allow you to enrol online and others allow enrolment by post. However, some only accept enrolment in person. If that is the case for you, you will need to get to Germany by then. Be aware: you usually cannot enrol once the deadline has passed.

As you can see, the letters of acceptance are sent out not long before the semester starts. If you wait until you receive the letter before getting on with your other preparations for studying in Germany, you can find yourself facing a lot of stress. You may even be unable to get to Germany in time for the start of the semester. In this section, we'll explain some of the things which you should get on with in advance.

### Funding

Before you come to Germany, you need to make absolutely sure of how you will fund your studies. You will need to know which costs to expect and the different funding opportunities which are available. We'll talk about those in the next few sections.

But before we go any further: it is hard to give a general view of how much money you will need to live in Germany. It depends too much on where you are studying and your lifestyle.

Nevertheless, we can say in general that Germany is not very expensive when compared to other European countries. Prices are higher in most of Germany's immediate neighbours, while northern European countries and Switzerland are much more expensive.

You can work out your approximate monthly outgoings, and you can look at how much money other students have on average each month. According to a recent government survey, the average student



spent €842 per month during the 2021 summer semester. The average student income currently stands at €1,036 a month. Another point of reference is how much money students are required to prove they possess when applying for a visa. This currently stands at €11,208 a year, which assumes monthly outgoings of €934. However, all these amounts may be rather low, as prices for housing, food and energy have risen sharply in recent times. As such, you should allow a little more.

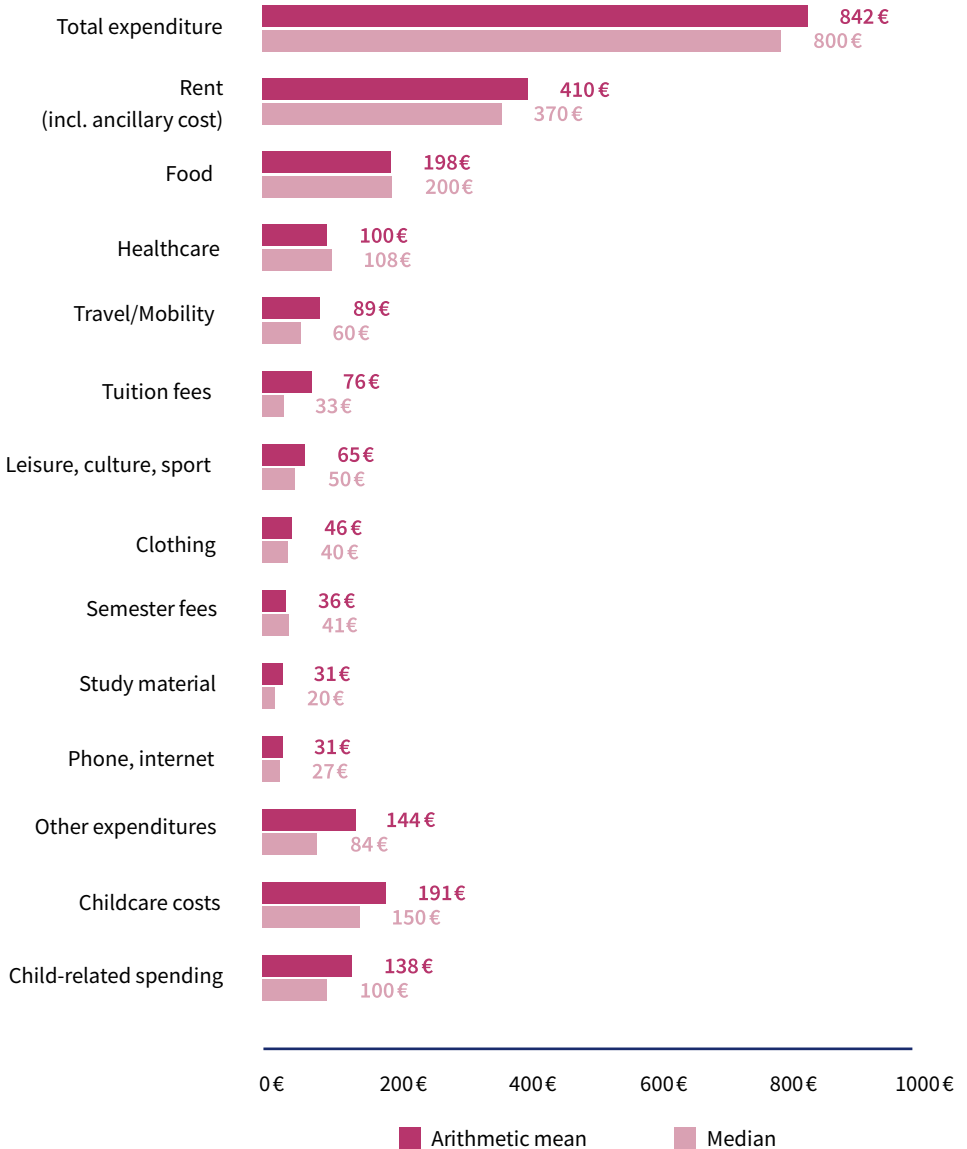
The largest expense for students is **rent** for a room or apartment. Including additional costs, students spend €410 on average on rent – almost half of their monthly budget. However, rents vary widely. In big cities in western Germany like Munich and Frankfurt am Main, you will have to spend a good deal more. The average student spends €720 a month for a privately rented room in a shared

flat in Munich and €580 in Frankfurt. Berlin was very affordable for a long time, but recently it has moved to the top of the price list, with a room in a shared flat costing €640. However, you can live much more cheaply in smaller cities in eastern Germany or the Ruhr region. You can also expect to pay a lot less for a room in a student residence.

Other major outgoings include **food** (€198 per month), costs for **travel and transport** (€89 per month) and **healthcare** (€100 per month). **Students with children** can find outgoings for children and childcare are a heavy burden. If you do not have much money, food and transport are a good place to start making savings. Try shopping in the cheap discount supermarkets and cook a lot of your own meals. If you live close to your higher education institution, you may not even need a ticket for public transport. Why not go by bike or on foot instead?



**MONTHLY STUDENT SPENDING: TOTAL AND BY TYPE**



Source: German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW), German National Association for Student Affairs (DSW) and the Research Group on Higher Education of the University of Konstanz: 22nd Social Survey



### MONEY SAVING TIP: EAT IN THE CAFETERIA

Every day, over 400,000 people eat in canteens and cafeterias run by German student unions. There are 875 such eateries in Germany, where you can often get a hot lunch for around €3. But the cafeteria isn't just a place to grab a bite to eat. It's a place to meet your fellow students and enjoy your breaks.

### Affordable culture for students

Students in Germany pay lower prices at many cultural institutions, making it more affordable to visit a museum, watch a play or an opera, or see a film in the cinema. But don't forget to have your student ID card with you at all times! Without it, you will find it hard to get a discounted ticket.

All higher education institutions charge **semester fees** and you should make sure you allow for these in your budget. They range widely from around €170 to €450, although some institutions charge less than €100. The fees cover social contributions and fees which fund facilities such as cafeterias and student residences. They also often include a semester ticket which gives you free use of public transport in the city. Some even let you travel for free in the region or the whole federal state.



### DEUTSCHLANDTICKET

The 'Deutschlandticket' was introduced on 1 May 2023. It currently costs €49 per month and allows you to use local and regional public transport to get anywhere in Germany. For example, you can use the metro in a city, take a regional train to a different town or use the bus to get out into the countryside. It is not yet clear how students could benefit from these tickets in the future. There are plans to integrate the Deutschlandticket into semester tickets. We recommend asking your higher education institution how it works there.

You will only need to budget for **tuition fees** in individual cases. Tuition fees are not charged for most bachelor's and master's degrees at public higher education institutions. However, for private universities and some master's degree programmes you will need to budget for fees, which can be as high as €10,000 per semester.

How can you cover these costs? While most international students are supported by their parents, one in two also makes an income by working part-time. A further 22% have savings and 15% receive scholarships.

## EARNING MONEY AND STUDYING

If you want to earn money from a job, you need to be aware of the law. No special rules apply to students from the EEA (European Economic Area) or Switzerland, who can work up to 20 hours a week, just like their German counterparts. From March 2024, all other students, however, can only work up to 140 full days or 280 half days a year. If you want to work more, you will need to get approval. Are you interested in a position as a working student? In this case, inform yourself about the current conditions.

There are all kinds of **scholarships** in Germany, but unlike other countries, these are not always awarded by higher education institutions. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) stands out in this area thanks to the wide range of scholarships it offers for international students. You can find out more in your home country through the DAAD's global network. Other organisations which offer scholarships include foundations linked to political parties,

church institutions, organisations linked to businesses and institutions which provide assistance to gifted students. The DAAD **scholarship database** ([www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de)) provides an overview of major scholarship opportunities. Bear in mind, though, that a scholarship will almost never cover your whole monthly outgoings throughout the entire period of your studies. Generally, a scholarship will be more of a supplement.



## EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES FOR EUROPEAN STUDENTS

Students from EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey can also take part in special exchange programmes. One very well known programme is Erasmus+, which funds study visits abroad for between three and twelve months. These exchanges take place as part of bilateral agreements between higher education institutions. Under these agreements, you are a guest of the partner institution, so you do not have to pay any tuition fees there. You can find more information at → [erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu](https://www.erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu).

### Health insurance

There are two types of health insurance in Germany: public and private. All students in Germany are required to show they hold one of these forms of insurance when they enrol for their studies. That means you need to get insurance cover before you come to Germany. You will need to know if your insurance is valid in Germany or if you need to take out a new policy.

In some cases, an insurance policy from your home country will be recognised in Germany. That is usually the case if you have public health insurance in an EU or EEA country. If you do, you can apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in your home country which you can then use in Germany.

Germany has also signed bilateral social security agreements with some other countries. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provides a summary at [www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/bilateral-agreements.html](https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/bilateral-agreements.html) where you can check to see if your country is included and whether health insurance is covered. If it is on the list, your health insurance will generally be valid in Germany.

If you have private insurance in your home country, you will need to find out in advance if it is accepted in Germany. The best way to do this is to ask your insurance provider. If your insurance is accepted, you can get a certificate from your insurance provider which you will need to show when you enrol in Germany.

If your insurance is not valid in Germany, you will need to take out insurance here. You can take out private insurance or choose the student tariff from a public insurance provider. The German National Association for Student Affairs advises international students to take out public insurance, even if it might be more expensive than some of the cheaper private insurance options. By taking out public insurance you can be confident that you will be looked after well in Germany if you fall ill. Policies usually cost around €110 per month.

However, this only applies to students aged under 30. If you are older than this, you either need to take out voluntary insurance from a public insurer or choose a private policy.

## Visas

Whether or not you require a visa depends on your country of origin.

If you are a citizen of an EU or EEA country, you do not require student visas for Germany – you can just travel on a valid identification document. Under certain conditions the same applies to students who already hold a residence permit to study in another EU country.

Citizens of several other countries such as Australia, the UK and the USA can travel to Germany without applying for a visa in advance. However if you come from one of these countries, you will need a valid residence permit for study purposes. You can apply for a permit after arriving in Germany by visiting the foreigners' registration office of your intended place of residence. You can check if these rules apply to your home country on the website of the Federal Foreign Office: [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/visa-service/231148](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/visa-service/231148).

## HEALTH INSURANCE AND PART-TIME WORK DURING YOUR STUDIES



Be aware that there are rules in Germany on how many hours you can work without having to take out your own health insurance. If you work too many hours, you must take out insurance in Germany, regardless of whether your insurance from your home country is valid here. The limit is currently 20 hours per week.

If you are from a different country, you must apply for a visa before you come to Germany. You can do this at the German consulate or embassy in your home country. You will need:

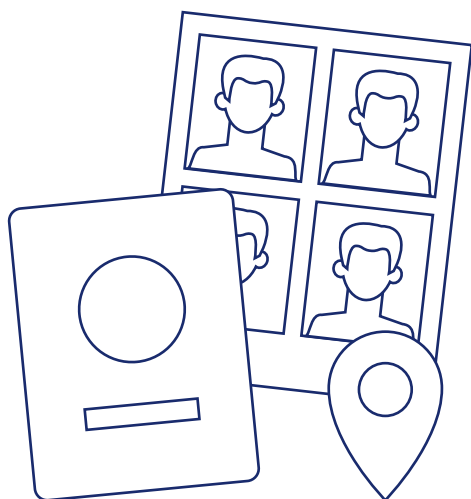
- your passport,
- a biometric passport photo,
- a completed application form,
- the letter of acceptance from your higher education institution
- and your proof of funding.

Make absolutely sure you are applying for the right type of visa. You will need a **study visa** ('Visum für Studienzwecke'). You should never travel on a tourist visa! It is not possible to convert a tourist visa into a study visa.

You can find a simple overview of the visa process on Make it in Germany, the Federal Government's portal for skilled workers from abroad: [www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa-residence/types/studying](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa-residence/types/studying). See the 'At a glance: Visa for studying' section.

A study visa is the best choice, but the deadlines are often tight. You can find the standard deadlines for your country on the website of the embassy or consulate. You may therefore not have enough time to apply for a visa after your place has been confirmed by your higher education institution. For this reason you can start by applying for a **student applicant visa** in Germany. The

visa is valid for 90 days and the foreigners authority in your area of Germany can issue it to you. It grants permission to stay in Germany for the purposes of applying to study and can be extended to a total stay of up to nine months. To apply for this visa you will again need proof of sufficient funds for the duration of your whole stay. You will also need to submit several other documents such as health insurance, your higher education entrance qualification from your home country and proof of your language skills. You should look up the details on the website of the German embassy or consulate in your country or ask in person.





## PROOF OF SUFFICIENT FUNDS

Your proof of sufficient funds shows the German embassy or consulate that you have enough money for your studies in Germany. Since 1 January 2023 this has been set at €11,208 a year (as of October 2023). Most international students use a type of account known as a 'Sperrkonto' (literally a 'blocked account') as proof of funds, with the funds shown as a credit to the account. A Sperrkonto must meet certain requirements. For example, it may only allow a certain level of withdrawals each month, and you can only close the account with approval from either an embassy or consulate, or the competent foreigners authority. Sperrkonten are available from a range of providers. The best approach is to get advice from the German embassy or consulate.

If you do not want to set up a Sperrkonto, your parents can present proof of their income and assets, or a person in Germany can act as your guarantor. Confirmation that you hold a recognised scholarship or have an annually renewable bank guarantee with a bank located in Germany will also be accepted. You can find detailed information on this topic on the website of the Federal Foreign Office and you should read this carefully: → [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/visa-service/buergerservice/faq/-/606850](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/visa-service/buergerservice/faq/-/606850) ('When applying for a student visa, how can I prove that my financing is secure?').

Don't forget! A study visa is valid for a maximum of two years and is therefore too short for a complete bachelor's degree. At that point you must apply to have your residence permit extended, and you will need to present proof of sufficient funds again.





**TIP:** If you have applied to several higher education institutions but you do not yet know which offer you want to accept, the best option is to apply for a student applicant visa. On your application you can state the higher education institution where you are most likely to study. If you later choose to study a different subject at a different institution, that does not matter. You can still change the student applicant visa in Germany to a residence permit for study purposes.

## 1.5 FINDING ACCOMMODATION BEFORE YOU COME TO GERMANY: SOME TIPS

On the subject of where to live during your studies, there are two things which you may not know in your home country.

- Firstly, confirmation of your place on a study programme does not automatically come with accommodation. Instead, you will have to find accommodation for yourself in Germany.
- Privately rented rooms and apartments in Germany generally come unfurnished. Kitchen equipment like an oven, sink or fridge is not always included, either.

### Types of apartments and accommodation in Germany

Many students live in **student residences**. These are especially popular among international students, and over 40% have a room in a student residence. The rooms in these residences are furnished and, with average costs of €250 per month, they are fairly cheap. What's more, you won't be alone for long there, either, and will quickly get to know other people. Another benefit is that you can apply and sign the contract for a room while you are still at home.

However, even if you apply early and international students get slightly preferential treatment, you cannot be certain of getting a room. The number of applicants exceeds the number of available rooms several times over. The numbers speak for themselves: there are just under 240,000 publicly funded places in student residences, but there are 2.5 million students! Submit your application early, as you don't necessarily need to wait for your letter of acceptance.



## Living in student residences

Student residences offer many different forms of accommodation. There are individual apartments where you have your own small kitchen and bathroom. However, shared flats known as 'WGs' are more common, where you have your own room but share a bathroom and kitchen. So how many people do you share with? It depends. You might just share with one other person, but it could be as many as six others. You may be familiar with shared rooms from your home country, but these are rare in Germany, and are effectively not on offer. It is also rare for shared flats to be separated by gender, so women and men usually live together. If you are not happy to do that, you should look on the private rental market, where you can take your gender preferences into account when choosing a place to live.

Many residences are run by student unions. You can find these options on the DAAD's accommodation finder. It contains almost 1,200 student residences at over 170 locations ([www.daad.de/accommodationfinder](http://www.daad.de/accommodationfinder)). The major churches in Germany also run their own student residences, and there are some commercial providers, too. But watch out, as these private residences can be quite expensive.



### STUDENT UNIONS' SERVICE PACKAGES

As of October 2023, 16 student unions in Germany offer service packages for international students. These are a kind of welcome package which always include a room in a student residence. They often also include a semester ticket, vouchers for the cafeteria or insurance. Some even include bed linen, crockery or a bike! Check to see if the student union at your higher education institution offers one of these packages.

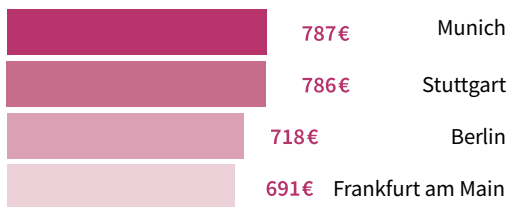
Another good option is a **shared flat**, known for short in German as a 'WG', which is short for Wohngemeinschaft. While you have your own room in a shared flat, you will share a bathroom and kitchen. You may also share communal areas and a balcony with your flatmates. The benefits are obvious, as the apartment usually includes essential facilities, particularly in the kitchen. Even the rooms are often at least part-furnished. In addition, it is much cheaper to live with other people, and you will not be on your own. Shared student flats are very common in Germany, and almost one in three students lives in one.

### Living costs in a shared flat

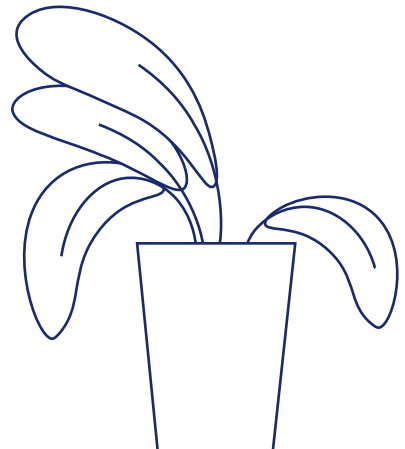
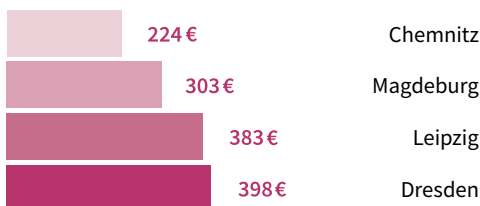
According to a recent study, students in Germany paid an average of €458 a month for a standard room in a shared flat in the 2023 summer semester. The most expensive cities are Munich (€720), Berlin (€640) and Frankfurt (€580). The cheapest place for students to live is Chemnitz, where rent costs an average of €253 per month. Essentially you will have to budget most for rent in major cities in western Germany and historic university cities.

### LIVING COSTS FOR A SMALL FLAT (30m<sup>2</sup> including 20% additional costs):

#### 4 most expensive cities



#### 4 least expensive cities





**TIP:** Most students start their studies in the winter semester. Only 10% start in the summer semester. That means it will be much easier to find somewhere to live if you start your studies in the summer semester. Finding somewhere to live during a semester is also easier since fewer people are looking for accommodation. Finding a short-term rental for the first few weeks or months would make this an option for you.

If you do not want to live in a shared flat or a student residence, you can look for a **small flat** on the open rental market. However, you will need to budget more for this.

Whether you are trying to rent a room in a shared flat or your own privately rented apartment, it can be difficult to get approval if you are not there in person. However, you can certainly do your research at home and could even arrange some viewings. Another option for a temporary solution is to find a room which is being rented for a limited period because the person who normally lives there is abroad. Things like that can be easier to arrange if you are not there in person.

### Could homeshare be an option for you?

Many older people in Germany live in fairly large apartments. Their children have left home but moving house would be too difficult, so they have empty rooms. Homeshare means that you get a room in exchange for help around the house or in the garden. Homeshare agreements never require you to provide care services. Generally, you would be expected to provide one hour of help per month per square metre of living

space. Tenants are only expected to pay for additional costs such as gas, water and electricity. You can find an overview of the cities where homeshare projects are available at [www.wohnenfuerhilfe.info](http://www.wohnenfuerhilfe.info).

### Coming to Germany without a place to live

What can you do if nothing has worked and you come to Germany without a place to live? Above all, make sure you find out in advance where you can sleep for the first few days or weeks. Does your higher education institution have a guest house where you could stay temporarily? Be sure to check with the international office of your institution about this. If it is not an option, you could always take a room in a B&B, holiday flat or hostel. However, that should only be for a few days, as accommodation of that kind would probably overstretch your budget.

### Where to look for accommodation

There are many offers on the internet, so it is worth researching online using the keywords 'Wohnung suchen' (looking for a flat), 'Wohnung finden' (finding a flat) und 'WG' (shared flat). You can find a selection of links here.

#### Student residence:

- DAAD accommodation finder: [www.daad.de/accommodationfinder](http://www.daad.de/accommodationfinder)
- Local student unions: [www.studierendenwerke.de/en/topics/accommodation/student-halls-of-residence/applying](http://www.studierendenwerke.de/en/topics/accommodation/student-halls-of-residence/applying)

#### Shared flats:

- WG-Gesucht.de: [www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de)
- Housing Anywhere: [housinganywhere.com](http://housinganywhere.com)
- Kleinanzeigen: [www.kleinanzeigen.de](http://www.kleinanzeigen.de)

#### Renting your own apartment:

- Immobilienscout24: [www.immobilienscout24.de](http://www.immobilienscout24.de)
- Immowelt: [www.immowelt.de](http://www.immowelt.de)

**Top tip:** Don't forget to check the noticeboards at your higher education institution and the advertisements in local newspapers. Many have online editions where you can view properties advertised for rent from the comfort of your own home.



## 1.6 CHECKLIST AND TIMETABLE

18  
months  
to go

**What do I want to do, and what opportunities are there in Germany?**

I know where to get information from:

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

I have made initial contacts

- with a DAAD office in my country.
- with a German lecturer at my higher education institution.
- through education fairs in my country.

I know

- how long I want to study in Germany.
- what kind of degree I want to achieve.
- which subject I want to study.
- which higher education institutions offer my subject.

15  
months  
to go

**Do I meet the requirements for my chosen study programme?**

- Are my school-leaving qualifications sufficient to study in Germany? Do I have the right qualifications for my chosen study programme?
- Language proficiency: Do I have the right German and/or English language skills? Do I need to improve my language skills?
- Funding: Can I afford to study in Germany? Am I eligible for a scholarship?

12  
months  
to go

**What do I need for my application and how does it work?**

- I know which documents I need for my application. In particular I need certified copies of my letter of acceptance and language certificate. I know if I need to provide certified copies and/or certified translations of my documents.
- I know where to send my application, i.e. to uni-assist, the Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung or directly to the higher education institution.
- I know when the application deadline is and when I need to submit my application.

6  
months  
to go

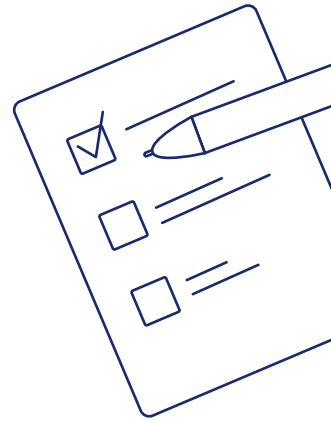
### How am I getting to Germany and what will I need?

- I know how I am getting to Germany.
- I know if I need a visa. If I do need a visa, I am informed about which visa I need, how to apply for it and what evidence that requires, such as funding and health insurance. I am also aware of how much time it will take. If the application deadline for my programme is too close to the start of the course, I know how to apply for a student applicant visa.
- I know which health precautions are required, e.g. vaccinations.

4-5  
months  
to go

### Have I sent off all my applications?

- I have sent off my application(s) for a place to study and met the application deadlines.
- If I am planning on living in a student residence, I have sent off my application, even if I am still waiting for official confirmation of acceptance on my programme.



3  
months  
to go

### Where am I going to live?

- If I am still waiting for confirmation of a room in a student residence or my application has been rejected, I am making every effort to find alternative accommodation, looking at advertisements and writing applications.
- In any case, I know where I can spend my first few nights in Germany.

**2  
months  
to go**

### The clock is ticking! Is everything ready?

- I have booked my tickets.
- I have made arrangements to find a place to live and have found somewhere I can stay for the first few nights if I need to.
- I have opened a blocked account if I need one for my visa.
- I have checked that I have valid health insurance.
- I have assembled all the documents I will need for my journey to Germany and made sure they are valid (see next section).
- I have written a packing list which is appropriate for the climate in Germany. If I am going for the winter semester I will pack winter clothing.

**A final  
check**

### Have I got all the essential documents in order?

- Valid passport or identity card
- Letter of acceptance from my higher education institution or confirmation of my application
- Birth certificate (original or translated and certified copy)
- School leaving or examination certificates (original or translated and certified copies)
- If necessary, university degree certificates and language certificates (original or translated and certified copies)
- Visa, if necessary
- Proof of sufficient funds, if necessary
- Confirmation that my health insurance is valid in Germany, or a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)
- Proof of vaccinations, if necessary

Have you got all your documents in order? Have a great trip and a fantastic start in Germany!







Learn more about Rostock.

#HelloGermany

← **YOUR FIRST  
KITESURFING LESSON**

↓ **DEEP DIVE FROM  
HERE INTO OCEAN  
BIOLOGY**

**TO THE BEACH THIS WAY** →

# HELLO STUDY ADVENTURE

Germany has a lot to offer. In addition to excellent study conditions, there are a variety of interesting places and activities to discover. Like here in Rostock.

**Learn more at [study-in-germany.de](https://www.study-in-germany.de)**

AN INITIATIVE OF THE



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research

**Study in  
Germany**

●●●●●●●●  
**Land of Ideas**

## 2 YOU'VE ARRIVED IN GERMANY – WHAT'S NEXT?

Once you have arrived in Germany you will need to get several things sorted out over the first few days and weeks. If your higher education institution only accepts enrolment in person, it's essential to enrol before the deadline. You may also need to deal with bureaucracy, especially if you need a residence permit for Germany. You will also have to choose the lectures and seminars you are going to attend and make sure the timetable is possible.

This may seem like a lot of work, but you will rise to the challenge – and don't forget, you don't have to do it all on your own. You will find many places where you can get help.

That's what this chapter is all about. We want you to get off to as smooth a start as possible in Germany!



**TIP:** Try to plan your journey so you don't arrive in Germany on a weekend. The international office will be closed on Saturdays and Sundays, as are banks and administrative offices. It may also be difficult to get the key to move into your student residence if the office staff are not at work. What's more, in Germany all the shops shut on Sundays, so you cannot do any shopping, either!

### 2.1 YOUR FIRST POINTS OF CONTACT IN GERMANY

Once you have arrived in Germany, the central point of contact at your higher education institution will be the **international office**.

Here you can get all the information you need for your first few days in Germany. They can often provide help with enrolment and visits to local administrative offices. The

international office can often give advice on finding somewhere to live.

The local **students union** could also be important to you, particularly if you are staying in a student residence. Members of the student union staff will be responsible for handing over the keys to your room

or flat once you arrive, for example. You will also come into frequent contact with the student union as your stay goes on, from lunch in the cafeteria to the sport and language courses which some student unions offer. You can also access information and advice on a range of issues here.

## 2.2 ENROLLING AT YOUR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

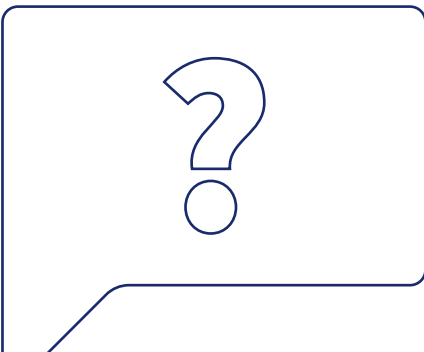
You don't become a student when you get accepted onto a study programme. You officially become a student when you enrol. In Germany this is known as 'Immatrikulation'. At some higher education institutions you can do this online or by post, so you can complete this task before you even get to Germany. However, in many cases you still have to enrol in person at your higher education institution. That makes it essential to get to Germany before the deadline.

You will find the details of the enrolment procedure and the specific dates in your letter of acceptance. It will also list the documents you need to enrol. Generally, these are:

- letter of acceptance
- proof of health insurance
- receipt for payment of the semester fee
- passport photo
- ID card/passport (and possibly your visa)
- and sometimes original copies of examination or degree certificates

If you have any questions, get in touch with the international office or the admissions office at your higher education institution. That way you can make sure you have everything you need to enrol and that nothing will go wrong.

Once you have enrolled, you will receive your student ID card and your semester ticket (if applicable). This usually happens by post. Now you are officially a student at a German higher education institution! You can start attending classes and take exams. You also have access to facilities such as the institution's library and sporting facilities. You can also take advantage of discounted student tickets for cultural institutions.



## 2.3 YOUR FIRST VISIT TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES IN YOUR NEW HOME

When you move to Germany, there is no getting around visiting administrative offices. So you need to prepare accordingly. Look online to find out in advance which administrative

offices in Germany you will need to visit, and which offices will be responsible for you where you live.



**TIP BEHÖRDENFINDER:** Administrative offices in Germany are known as 'Behörden'. If you don't know which offices are responsible for you, you can use [umziehen.de/behördenfinder](https://www.umziehen.de/behördenfinder). Enter the postal code or name of the city where you will be studying and you will be shown a list of the offices which handle different questions and issues.

You must make sure you check online in advance so you know the deadlines which apply to you and make appointments with the offices. You will usually have to expect to wait several weeks for an appointment. Ensure you get in touch with the international office at your higher education

institution. They are well versed in these procedures and will certainly be able to give you tips and practical support.

But at the same time, be patient. Administrative processes just take time.



**TIP INTERPRETERS:** What happens if you can't speak German very well yet? Take someone with you who can speak German well when you have to visit administrative offices. Official German can be pretty complicated and you will probably find things easier if you have someone to translate for you. Find out if the international office at your higher education institution can provide a suitable person.

### 2.3.1 Residents registration office

Everyone who lives in Germany is required by law to register with the residents registration office (Einwohnermeldeamt). As soon as you have found accommodation you should visit the residents registration office straight away where you fill in a registration

form. Look after this form carefully. Registration is free in all but a very few offices.

Don't put this off for too long, though, as you only have two weeks to do it.

#### RESIDENTS REGISTRATION OFFICE

Einwohnermeldeamt, Bürgerbüro, Bezirksamt: These German terms all refer to the same type of office: the residents registration office. There may be long waiting times in major cities, so make an appointment online in advance if you can. That will save you from waiting in a queue for a long time. However, if the office does not have any appointments before the deadline, don't worry: you only have to show that you made the appointment before the deadline.

You will need the following documents to register at the residents registration office:

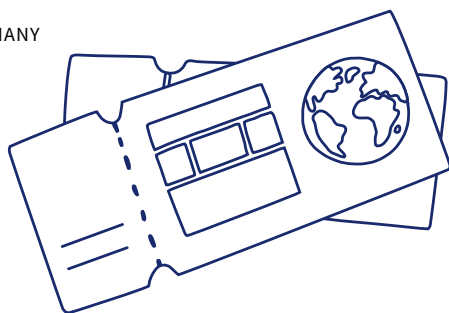
- passport (with your visa if necessary) or ID card
- confirmation from your landlord that you have moved in

If you do not need a visa to stay in Germany, you will get your confirmation of your right to remain from the residents registration office directly. You may also have to provide evidence that you have health insurance and the funds to cover your living expenses.

**Please note:** If you move within Germany at a later date, even within the same city, you must repeat this step and report your new address to the residents registration office.

### 2.3.2 Immigration office

If you travelled to Germany on a visa or need to apply for a visa after you arrived, you will need to visit another administrative office: the immigration office. These are municipal offices in your city which handle all questions concerning immigration law and your right to remain.



You apply to the immigration office for your residence permit. You must do this within three months of arriving in Germany, and you must do it in-person at the appropriate office.

You will usually have to provide the following documents:

- passport (including your visa if necessary)
- confirmation of registration with the residents registration office
- proof of health insurance
- certificate of enrolment
- You may also need: proof of sufficient funds, health certificate, rental contract, and a biometric passport photo

Find out in advance which documents you will need – you can check on the immigration office's website for this. Make absolutely sure to take all these documents to your appointment: it is better to take too many than too few! If you are missing anything at your appointment you will usually need to make a new one.

You also need to factor in the fee which you have to pay at the office, which is usually around €100. Find out the fee in advance in the immigration office which is responsible for your area.

Contact your international office, where you will find good and experienced people to talk to on questions about residence permits.

Your residence permit is called an 'elektronischer Aufenthaltstitel' or eAT. It is a card with an integrated chip which stores certain information about you. You can collect your card four to six weeks after applying in person at the immigration office. Your eAT card will be valid for a maximum of two years. If your studies take longer than this, you need to extend your residence permit – make absolutely sure to do it before your card expires.

**Important:** When extending your residence permit you must prove that you are still within the standard period of study for your study programme. You must also provide new proof that you can cover the costs of your living expenses. You may need to present proof of funding again by showing that you have the necessary funds in a blocked account.

## 2.4 ORGANISATION OF STUDIES

Higher education gives you much more freedom than school, and Germany offers particularly high levels of independence. For example, you will not be given a fixed timetable at the start of the semester which you have to follow. This means that, within certain limits, you can organise your studies in the way that best suits your interests. This in turn requires independence and initiative. You will also need some basic information, and we'll explain that here.



## HOW IS A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION ORGANISED?

You will encounter a diverse mix of different terms at German higher education institutions, from faculties and departments to institutes and seminars. It may seem confusing, but it is quite straightforward. Individual subjects are combined into faculties and departments, such as the Faculty of Social Sciences. Faculties are made up of institutes and seminars. In our example, the Institute of Political Sciences would be a part of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Within these institutes there are professorships which are held by professors, along with other lecturers. People who work in an institute generally have their offices close together on one floor or in a separate building. You'll quickly find your way around.

As with every other stage of the process, you can get help with assembling your timetable. Go to the introduction and welcome events which are held by most faculties and student bodies. Attend the orientation events which are offered by your international office. Get an introduction to your institution's library – check for when tours and events are taking place.

So how do you compile your own timetable? Each study programme has study regulations that tell you which modules you must complete. Modules often consist of several lectures and classes linked to a topic

or theme. However, you have a good deal of freedom in which of these to attend. You will often be able to choose which individual classes and lectures you want to attend for a certain module.

To make a good choice you will need to get hold of the course catalogue for your study programme. Your institute may also provide an online course catalogue which includes explanatory notes. These describe all the courses, not only in terms of the content but also how the course is taught. They also tell you how many credit points are awarded for that course.



**TIP:** If you want to attend a seminar, register in good time. There is often high demand for certain seminars because the topic is interesting or the lecturer is popular.

These are the most common forms of classes:

- **Lectures:** Lectures are usually attended by large numbers of students, so the main element is the lecture delivered by the lecturer. Discussions tend to be quite rare.
- **Seminars and courses:** In these classes, the number of participants is limited and teaching is interactive. There are also a lot of discussions.
- **Tutorials:** The main focus of tutorials is on exploring the contents of lectures, seminars and courses in greater depth. They are sometimes known as 'Übungen', which means practice or dry run, and they allow you to practise using your knowledge and skills.
- **Revision courses:** These focus on revising material you have already studied and preparing for specific exams.

For many courses, you will have to take an exam and these can take many different forms:

- **Written examinations:** In a written exam, you will be tested on the topic of a course. They usually take place at the end of a semester or during the semester breaks.
- **Term papers:** For a term paper, you write an essay on a predetermined topic. You will usually complete these during the semester breaks, although some may be due before the end of a semester.
- **Presentations:** In presentations you give a talk on a topic. You complete these during the semester.
- **Oral examinations:** In place of a written exam, you may be asked to take an oral exam on the topic of the course. These usually take place at the end of the semester or during the semester break.

## ECTS CREDIT POINTS

Germany uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, or ECTS, to measure the workload required to achieve a degree. One credit point equates to between 25 and 30 working hours. You will usually have to achieve 30 credit points per semester in order to complete your studies within the standard period. In order to graduate from a bachelor's degree programme you will need between 180 and 240 credit points, and between 60 and 120 credit points for a master's degree. It all adds up – studying is a time-intensive business!





## 2.5 OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

The international office and student union at your institution can help with more than just bureaucratic affairs. They often hold events where you can meet other people. You can also find specific support services there.

The vast majority of **international offices** offer special support to help international students settle in. These range from special introductory events and single welcome events to whole welcome weeks. Some offer a pick-up service so someone meets you at the railway station or even the airport.



**TIP:** The vast majority of higher education institutions offer more than just welcome events for international students. There are events where new students can get to know one another such as visits to bars or tours of the city. Many faculties offer similar events for their new students. Don't hesitate to take part. You'll have the chance to meet German students and other international students who are new to the city and are looking to meet people and make friends. Friendships which last a lifetime get made at events like these!

It is common for international offices to run so-called **buddy programmes**. These programmes put international students in touch with someone who will be their buddy. The buddy then helps with appointments at administrative offices as well as

questions about everyday life and studies. Buddies are often experienced students who are in higher semesters. If you're interested, make sure to ask the international office if they can arrange a buddy for you.



**TIP:** Some cities offer buddy programmes, too. These buddies are not necessarily students. They are just people who want to make it easier for international students who are starting life in Germany. Many of them are older people, and sometimes a buddy programme can lead to an intergenerational friendship. If you're interested, contact the city hall directly.

If you live in a student residence, a **resident tutor** can help you settle in. Ask your student union if your residence offers this.

In addition every higher education institution has a **student council**. The councils are elected by the students themselves to communicate their interests to the management of the institution. These councils are often known as AStA (general student committee), StuRa (student council) or StuPa (student parliament). They often organise sport, cultural and leisure programmes at higher education institutions and provide advice on finding accommodation and jobs. Some even offer language courses. Check out the student council at your institution to see what is on offer.

It is also common to find **international student groups** especially for international students. The main focus of these groups is on helping new arrivals make contact quickly with other students, so they organise parties, excursions and regular meetings at bars and cafés.

**Student representatives** can help with academic problems. They are groups of students who are elected to represent the interests of students in a given faculty. Student representatives are often known as 'Fachschaft' and can help you arrange your timetable and find your way around your new higher education institution. But they don't forget about social interaction, either. Student representatives are well known for organising information events for new students – and parties, too.

### HELP WITH SPECIFIC ISSUES:



- The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) provides advice on all issues related to migration (→ [www.bamf.de/EN/](http://www.bamf.de/EN/))
- The Federal Employment Agency (BA) helps people find work and may in certain cases be required to approve employment (→ [www.arbeitsagentur.de/en](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en))
- Health insurers are there to help with all questions linked to health insurance (you can also find information at → [www.daad.de/health-insurance](http://www.daad.de/health-insurance))
- The Federal Central Tax Office is responsible for everything connected to taxes, such as tax IDs and tax declarations (→ [www.finanzamt.de](http://www.finanzamt.de))



# 3 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL STAY IN GERMANY

Once you have overcome the challenges of getting started in Germany, you'll need to make life here a positive experience – and we've got some great ideas. For most people, that means more than just doing well academically. So this chapter includes suggestions for how to meet people and make friends. You will also find advice on how to improve your German skills and work experience during your studies. You might even like Germany so much that you want to stay here once you have completed your studies. The odds are in your favour, and we'll explain how you can achieve your goal.

Obviously, moving away from home and living in a foreign country is not always easy. So we'll explain and give you specific advice for when problems arise and who to ask if you need help.

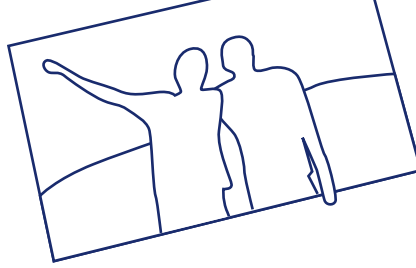
## 3.1 MEETING PEOPLE AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS

Feeling happy in Germany depends on a lot more than just doing well in your studies. A large part of enjoying life here comes from making new acquaintances and getting to know people with whom you enjoy spending your free time.

However, this can be a bit of a challenge at a large higher education institution with thousands of students. Something to bear in mind is this: many of your fellow students are new in town just like you and are looking to meet new people. So don't worry about being the only person who doesn't know anybody! Why not be brave and take the first step? Maybe the other people are shy, too. Take advantage of opportunities to talk to other students and get to know them. We have collected a few ideas for straightforward ways to meet other people.

Various forms of **orientation events** take place at higher education institutions which are explicitly aimed at international students, such as Erasmus+ events. Check with your international office, student representatives or student council to find out when these are taking place. Then go and get involved! These events are particularly good places to meet students in their first semesters who are also looking to meet other people.

International offices, student representatives and student councils also regularly organise events of their own, such as regular meetings at a bar, café or restaurant, known in German as a '**Stammtisch**'. Another common type of event are evenings when people meet up to cook and eat together. These are all casual meet-ups where you can just



chat to others. Who knows, you might meet someone there and be able to arrange other activities together right then.

**Parties** are a regular occurrence at higher education institutions and are an easy way to meet new people.

All higher education institutions have a range of **student groups** which are usually dedicated to a particular activity or topic. Do you enjoy singing? Then try out for the choir. Are you a keen actor? Many higher education institutions have theatre groups which you can join. Do you love debating? If you do, debating societies and political student groups could be fun. All you need to do is check out your higher education institution's website to see which groups are available there.

If you are a member of a religion, **religious communities** could be for you. There are often groups for all world religions. But don't worry: they aren't just for prayer. They also arrange excursions, parties and much more.

### Meeting people on international programmes

If you study on an international programme, you might find it even easier to meet new people, especially if you don't speak German very well yet. On these programmes, most of the participants come from other countries or at least from different cities. Just like you, they are keen to get to know new people quickly.

If you're a student who loves being active, **sport** can offer a great opportunity to meet people. The range of sport courses on offer is rich and varied. If your higher education institution is located near the sea or a large lake, you will find that the sporting options available include water sports like sailing. Team sports and racket sports like football and badminton are usually available everywhere, as are gymnastics, athletics and yoga. Another plus is that these activities are generally free of charge. You can find the sports offered at your higher education institution on its website.

Last but not least, take advantage of the opportunities provided by **social media**. Every higher education institution maintains Facebook and Instagram profiles, and possibly other platforms, too. They post information about events and deadlines on these sites, and this might be another way for you to make some initial contacts. 'Study in Germany' also has profiles on these platforms.

## 3.2 LEARNING AND IMPROVING YOUR GERMAN IN GERMANY

Even if you don't need any German skills for your study programme, it is certainly important to be able to speak a little German in daily life. Here are a few ways you can focus on improving your German language skills during your stay in Germany.

You could take a **language course** which is designed for speakers of your ability. Try asking at the **language centre** of your higher education institution to see if they offer suitable courses. These are often available for free and you can take the course alongside your studies during the semester.

There are also many state-funded and private course providers. Some of the most well known are the **Goethe-Institut, adult education centres** (called 'Volkshochschule') and Deutsche Welle. You can also check out the private courses in your area or see which online courses are available. Be aware, though, that you will usually have to pay a fee to take these courses.

It's also worth thinking about attending a summer school. These allow you to focus on improving your language skills during a semester break. Many higher education institutions offer summer schools for speakers of different levels. Check out [www.summer-schools.de](http://www.summer-schools.de) to find suitable options. However, you should be aware that you usually have to pay for these courses.

You can also focus on improving your language skills without having to go through institutions. Have you ever heard of **language exchanges**? Through these, two people are paired up who want to learn the other person's first language. You meet regularly and practice using your languages together. Your international office will often arrange language exchanges. Why not go and find out? You could also find a suitable partner online via social media or online exchanges. In fact, your higher education institution may even run its own language exchange!

### 3.3 GET WORK EXPERIENCE THROUGH WORK PLACEMENTS AND PART-TIME JOBS

Studying in Germany is also a great opportunity to get to know the country's employment market. If you are toying with the idea of staying on in Germany after your studies, you should definitely make use of this opportunity.

Essentially there are two options: you can undertake a work placement alongside your studies or work part-time.



**TIP:** What if you want to try out speaking German or improve your skills, but without making a big deal of it? Just take the plunge! You could go for a coffee with your fellow students or try speaking German at parties. You could volunteer for a club, go to the cinema or watch German films on TV. Even if you speak English very well, embrace the opportunity to speak German, even if you are sorely tempted to speak English.

### 3.3.1 Work placements

On a work placement you can start gaining work experience in your subject area. A work placement could allow you to take one of your areas of interest from your studies and go into greater depth, gaining more specialist knowledge on the subject. On the other hand, work placements can also help you realise that certain types of work are particularly appealing to you or do not suit you at all. Experiences like that can be important for your future career, too. Last but not least, you can start making contacts outside higher education – these could be helpful for your career further down the line.

You can undertake a **voluntary work placement** as part of any study programme. These placements are subject to the same regulations as part-time jobs for students. That means that from March 2024, students who are not from the EU or EEA can work for up to 140 days a year without having to get permission from the immigration office or Federal Employment Agency. You'll find more details in the next chapter, 'Working part-time'.

Some study programmes include **compulsory work placements**. Check the regulations of your programme to see if that applies to you. These will tell you the details of how long your placement should last, the type of work and possibly even where your placement will be. If your programme includes a compulsory work placement, there will usually be someone in the faculty who is responsible for the topic. If you

go and see them during office hours you are bound to get plenty of useful advice. You may even get advertisements for work placements from businesses and organisations. One important point is that compulsory work placements are subject to different rules from voluntary placements or part-time jobs. If you are from outside the EU or EEA, you can work for over 140 days on a compulsory placement without having to get special approval (from March 2024). The hours you work will not be counted against the 140 days you can work on other placements or part-time.

Online work placement exchanges can help you find a placement in Germany. Many departments and faculties have their own exchanges, while some are run by higher education institutions, usually by the career centre. You will also find work placement exchanges online which specialise in certain careers and industries. And ask around among your fellow students, who might be able to give you a tip or two about rewarding work placements.

**TIP:** Your study programme regulations will state the requirements of a compulsory work placement. You will have to get your placement approved in advance to ensure that it fulfils these requirements. The person who handles work placements in your faculty will usually grant approval for a placement. So don't start any work placements without getting approval first! You may find that it is not recognised afterwards.



## PAYMENT FOR WORK PLACEMENTS

Germany has a minimum wage which is set at €12 per hour (as of 2023). However, this does not always apply to work placements. For example, you can be paid less for a compulsory placement. Moreover, the minimum wage only comes into force for voluntary placements which last for more than three months. That means you do not have a legal right to a salary for most placements. Take this into account when looking for placements and clarify in advance if your placement provider is willing to pay you, and if so, how much.

You can find more information on work placements at [www.daad.de/internship](http://www.daad.de/internship).

### 3.3.2 Working part-time

Working part-time can be a way to start getting experience of working in Germany, and one positive side effect is that you can earn some money as well. But bear in mind that your studies will take up a lot of your time, too. It is very unlikely that you will be able to fund your studies completely by working part-time, and on top of this there are rules on how much students can work.

If you come from the EU or EEA, you have the same employment rights as German students. You have free access to the employment market. However, if you work more than 20 hours a week you must pay insurance contributions. Your studies will also suffer if you are working that long every week.

If you come from a non-EU or EEA country, the following rules apply to you:

- You can work up to 140 full days or 280 half days a year without having to get approval (from March 2024). Self-employed or freelance work must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- If you want to work more than these limits, you must get approval from your local employment agency and the immigration office.
- Research assistants at higher education institutions are exempt from these rules. There is no limit on how much they can work, but they must still inform the immigration office.

You can find more information at [www.daad.de/job](http://www.daad.de/job).

Students have all kinds of part-time jobs. Many work as **student assistants** or **research assistants** at higher education institutions. Here you work for a department and help the professors by researching, working in the library or giving tutorials. Jobs like these have two advantages.



Firstly, you are not limited to the maximum number of hours which apply to other jobs, and secondly you are working on subject matter which is relevant to your studies.

**Classic part-time student jobs** outside higher education include waiting in cafés, bars and clubs, working at trade fairs or as a courier. Some businesses employ students who are known in German as ‘Werkstudierende’. In these cases you can look for jobs which are linked to your subject, but these jobs often require you to have completed several semesters of study.

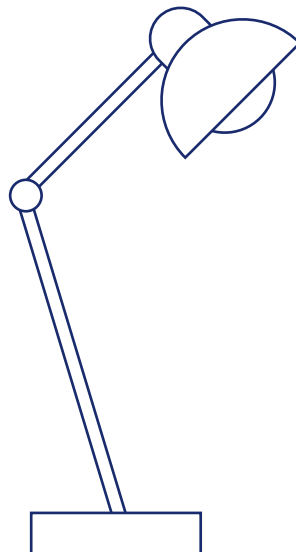
If you are looking for work, check the job advertisements on your higher education institution’s website. Other good places to look include the local employment agency, noticeboards at your higher education institution, job ads in local newspapers and, of course, the many job sites online.

### 3.4 HOW CAN I STAY ON IN GERMANY AFTER MY STUDIES?

What happens if you like living in Germany so much that you want to stay on here after graduating? The odds are in your favour.

The majority of international students initially stay in Germany after graduating. Two-thirds of international students are still in Germany a year after graduating, while almost half are still here after five years. Even ten years after graduating, almost 40% of former international students still live in Germany. Of these, around one-third hold residence and work permits, while another third have actually become German citizens.

What rules apply to you and how you can improve your chances of getting a job in Germany? We can explain.



### 3.4.1 The law and how it affects you

Once again, the situation is easiest if you come from an EU or EEA country. If you do, you have free access to employment in Germany and enjoy the same status as German citizens.

Citizens of other countries, however, are subject to different rules. After graduating, you can initially **extend your residence permit by up to 18 months**. That gives you time to find a job which is appropriate to your qualifications. However, you will need to prove that you can cover your living expenses for this period and that you have health insurance.

During this period you are allowed to work and you can do any job.

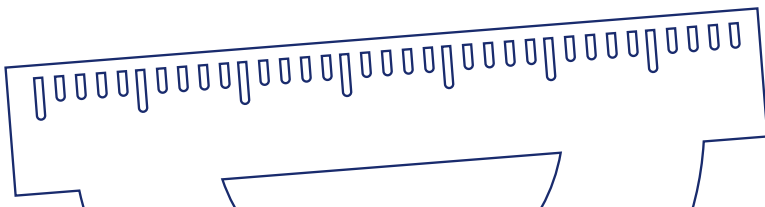
If you do find an appropriate job during these 18 months, you can get a **residence permit for employment**. From March 2024, you are no longer bound to your field of study when looking for employment. The specific job does not have to be related to the degree from the higher education institution. An exception is employment in regulated professions (e.g. medical doctor) and the receipt of the EU Blue Card.



**TIP:** Once you have completed your degree, you can apply for jobs in skilled professions.

Under certain conditions, after two years in employment you can get permission for permanent residence, which allows you to remain in Germany permanently. In 2023, the Federal Government decided to amend the law to make it easier for skilled workers to find work and settle in Germany. These new regulations will come into force in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

Further information and advice is available on the official portal of the Federal Government 'Make it in Germany': [www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/).





#### TIP: THE EU BLUE CARD

You can apply for the EU Blue Card. From November 2023, new conditions will apply and the criteria (including a completed degree from a higher education institution and a concrete job offer) will be continuously adjusted. The list of bottleneck professions is also being revised. Please find out about the current framework conditions at → [www.bamf.de/bluecard](http://www.bamf.de/bluecard).

### 3.4.2 Chances of getting a job in Germany

At present the chances of finding employment in Germany are the best they have been in a long time – and graduates are no exception.

Certain degrees give you better chances than others. **Doctors** are in particularly high demand, both in hospitals and private practices. This situation is not going to change, as many doctors will retire in the near future. In federal states in eastern Germany it is already proving difficult to find people to take over the running of GP practices. Employers are also desperately looking for **engineers, IT specialists and scientists**.

**Small and medium-sized enterprises** play a major role in Germany. Almost all businesses here are in this category, which makes them correspondingly important for the employment market. Just under half of people employed in the private sector work for small and medium-sized enterprises. If you're looking for work, make sure you include job adverts from SMEs in your search. Germany does not have many large

companies and competition for lucrative jobs is much more intense.

#### Hidden Champions

Germany is the land of hidden champions. These are firms which are not well known but are market leaders in their field. Most are family businesses with a rich heritage and they tend to be based in rural areas.

Whatever degree you hold, you can increase your job prospects by having good **German skills**. You cannot work as a doctor if you cannot speak German. The situation is similar in many other professions, so learn German while you are studying. Research institutions and large international corporations are pretty much the only exception to this rule. English is used as the everyday language here, and you will get on very well indeed if you speak excellent English. However, without a basic knowledge of German you will find daily life more difficult, regardless of whether you are in higher education or already in the world of work.



## PORTAL FOR INTERNATIONAL SKILLED WORKERS

The → [www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/) portal provides advice to international skilled workers who want to work in Germany. It includes full details on how to find work in Germany and various forms of residence permits. It also includes a job site where you can search for specific careers. The portal is run by the German government.

### 3.5 WHAT TO DO IF THERE'S A PROBLEM

Regardless of how happy you feel in Germany, studying is always a challenge, especially in foreign surroundings. So it's a good idea to know where you can ask for help if problems arise. That's what this chapter is all about.

#### 3.5.1 Sickness

In order to enrol at a higher education institution you must prove that you have health insurance. If you feel ill, don't hesitate to see a doctor. Germany has many well-trained doctors who provide care which is up to the latest standards. Your health insurer will cover the cost of seeing a doctor. There are also many pharmacies where you can get advice on health questions. They can also give you medication, although you have to pay for medication you get directly from the pharmacy without a prescription from a doctor.

If you feel ill the first person to contact is a family doctor, also known as a GP or general practitioner. These doctors typically

treat mild illnesses such as the flu and can prescribe the medication you need. You can then pick your medication up from the pharmacy for a small fee.

However, GPs are only available on weekdays. If you fall ill over the weekend and cannot wait until Monday to see a doctor, the best option is to go to an on-call clinic (known in German as a 'Bereitschaftspraxis'). These clinics exist in many cities. Just search online for 'Bereitschaftspraxis' and the name of your city to find a clinic nearby. Alternatively, call 116 117 ([www.116117.de/de/englisch.php](http://www.116117.de/de/englisch.php)). If there is no on-call clinic in your city, you should go straight to hospital. The hospital is also your first port of call in emergencies. If the situation is especially dangerous, call 112 for an ambulance. Your health insurer will also cover these costs.

**Please note:** You should only go to an on-call clinic if you have an urgent problem but it is not an emergency. If it really is an emergency, go straight to hospital or call an ambulance.

Your insurance will also cover visits to specialist doctors. In some cases your GP will



**TIP:** Find a GP in Germany. They are your first point of contact for a mild illness. You can find a suitable local practice by looking on → [www.kbv.de/arztsuche](http://www.kbv.de/arztsuche).

refer you to a specialist. Sometimes you can also make an appointment with one yourself – it depends on the medical field concerned. If you have toothache or want a dental check-up, you can make an appointment yourself with a dental practice. But be aware that it can take some time to get an appointment with a specialist doctor.

Are you worried about seeing a doctor because your German isn't very good yet? Usually, there's nothing to be afraid of. Most doctors in Germany speak English fairly well and some even speak other foreign languages, too. If you feel unsure, you can ask your international office for someone to accompany you and translate for you.

### 3.5.2 Help with mental health

Spending a long time away from home and feeling unfamiliar with your new surroundings can make you feel homesick. Studying can be more of a strain if you are unfamiliar with the language and environment. That is all completely normal.

However, if you feel stressed and can see that these feelings are negatively affecting your health or your studies, you should get professional help. There are many ways of doing this.

- Many higher education institutions provide psychological services and advice centres. Some offer workshops on common problems in higher education such as time management. You can also arrange one-to-one counselling. These sessions are usually provided by the faculty of psychology or social sciences. They may also be arranged by the central student support services office or the international office.
- Some student unions offer counselling services. You can find details at [www.studierendenwerke.de/en/topics/counselling-and-advisory-services/psychological-counselling-services](http://www.studierendenwerke.de/en/topics/counselling-and-advisory-services/psychological-counselling-services).
- An alternative first step is to talk to your GP.
- Of course it may be possible to contact a psychotherapist directly, but be aware that your insurance will not always cover the cost of the appointment. You should check this in advance. In addition, there is high demand for medical appointments and you may have to wait several months for an appointment.

Last but not least, there is a lot you can do to avoid feelings of depression. One of the most important is to avoid becoming isolated and to stay active, socially and in other ways. Meet up with your fellow students and, if you feel comfortable to, talk about the difficulties you are facing. Just sharing your experiences can help. Please also visit: [www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/first-steps-germany/psychological-wellbeing/](http://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/first-steps-germany/psychological-wellbeing/).

### 3.5.3 Staying safe in daily life

Compared to other countries, Germany is very safe. Germany is right at the bottom of international rankings for many crimes such as petty crime and assault. Most people in Germany feel safe when they are out on the streets alone at night. But if anything does happen, call the police on 110. You can rely on them to help you whatever the time of day or night.

But don't take unnecessary risks, even if the conditions in Germany are generally safe. Don't walk through dark and deserted streets or parks alone at night. Find out from your fellow students if there are parts of town which are considered less safe. The international office can also give you information about this.

You can also get assistance from the consulates or embassy of your home country. You can find your country's embassy and consulates in Germany listed on the Federal Foreign Office website: [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/ReiseUndSicherheit/vertretungen-anderer-staaten](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/ReiseUndSicherheit/vertretungen-anderer-staaten).

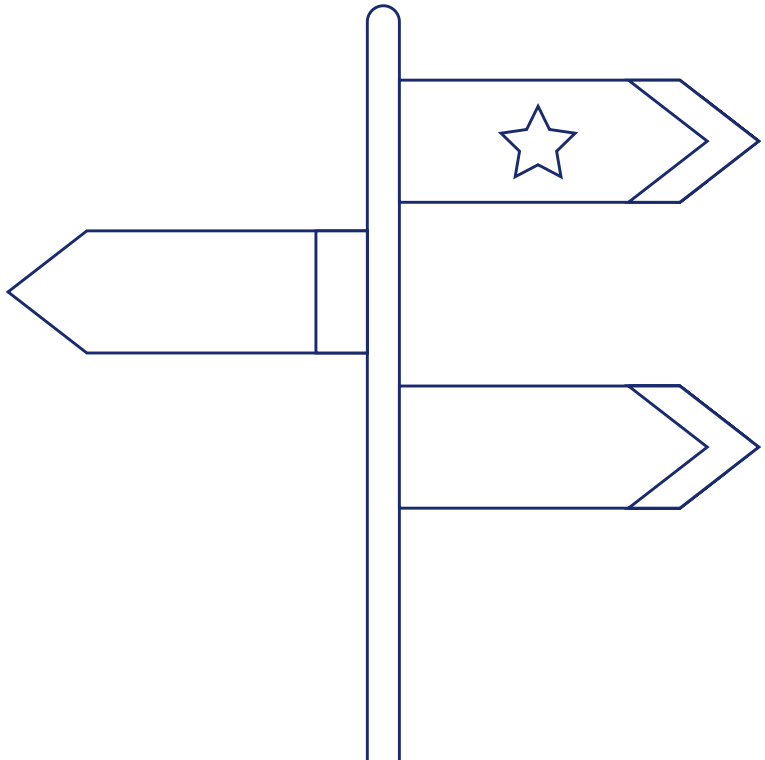
**HAVE A SAFE JOURNEY AND ALL THE BEST FOR YOUR STUDIES!**

You now know what opportunities for study are available in Germany and how international students can apply for a place. We've also shared some advice on how to get off to a good start and build a career in Germany.

Now it's up to you to get started with everything you need to do. This brochure can serve as a guideline, but it cannot replace speaking to a real person for advice, and it cannot answer all your individual questions. So if you're interested in learning more, make sure you get in touch with the DAAD offices in your country.

You can find more DAAD publications with detailed information for international students at [www.daad.de/publications-germany/](http://www.daad.de/publications-germany/).

We hope you have a great journey and that your time in Germany is exciting and full of new experiences! Best of luck!



## THE NUMBERS: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN GERMANY

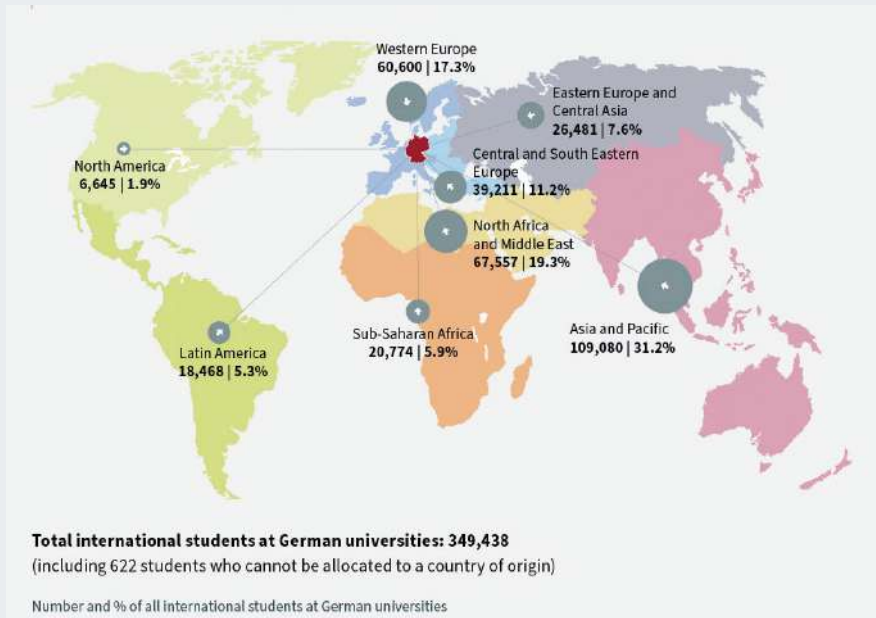
### Students in higher education (2021/2022 winter semester)

German students	2,501,351
International students*	440,564
of which foreign nationals educated in Germany	91,126
of which foreign nationals educated elsewhere	349,438
Total students	2,941,915

\* the group of international students includes foreign students who gained higher education qualifications in Germany or at a German school abroad (known as 'Bildungsinländer'), and foreign students who gained higher education entrance qualifications at schools outside Germany (known as 'Bildungsausländer').

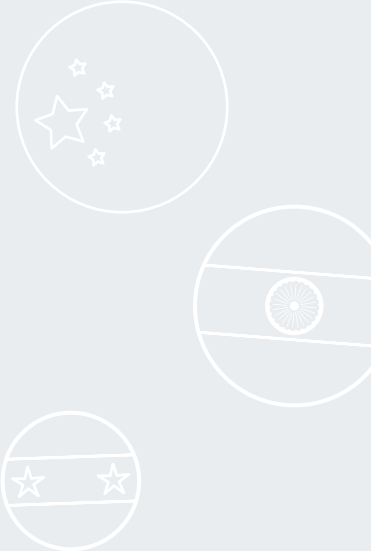
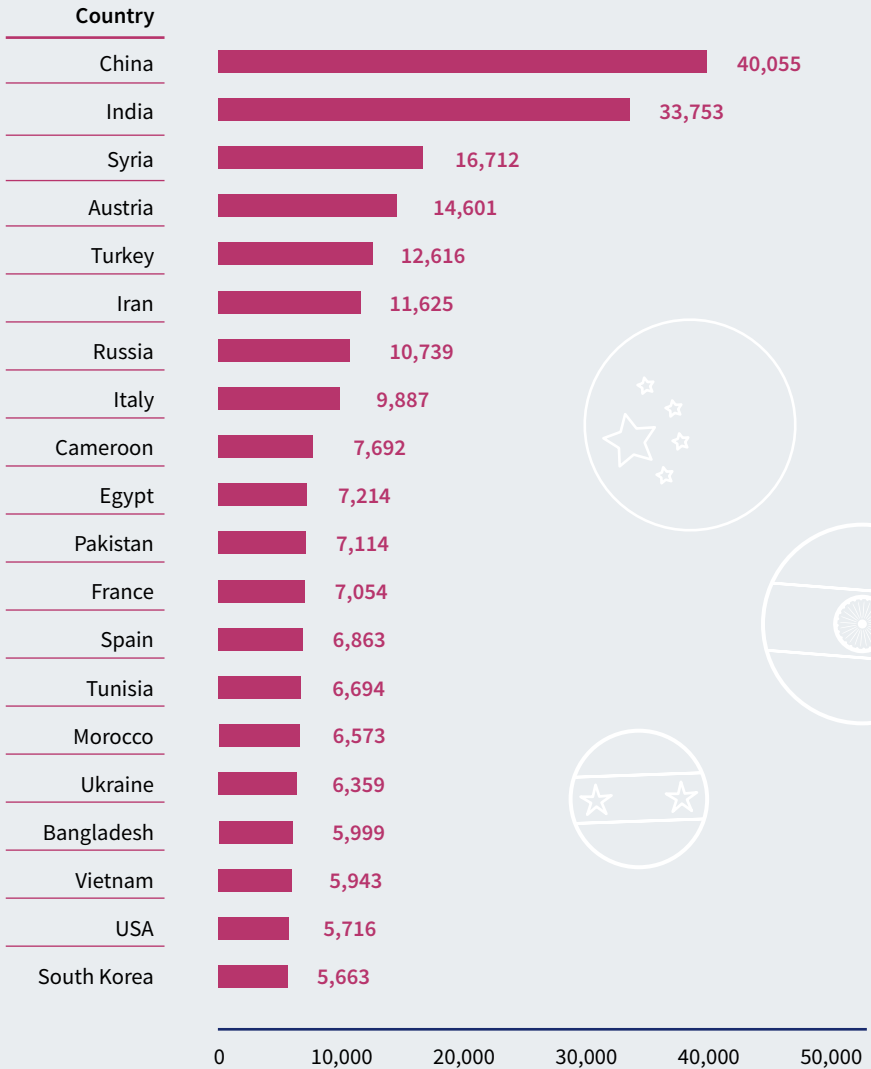
Figures taken from 'Wissenschaft weltweit kompakt 2023', published jointly by the DAAD and DZHW. Used under Creative Commons Licence CC BY-SA 4.0.

### International students by region of origin (2021/2022 winter semester)



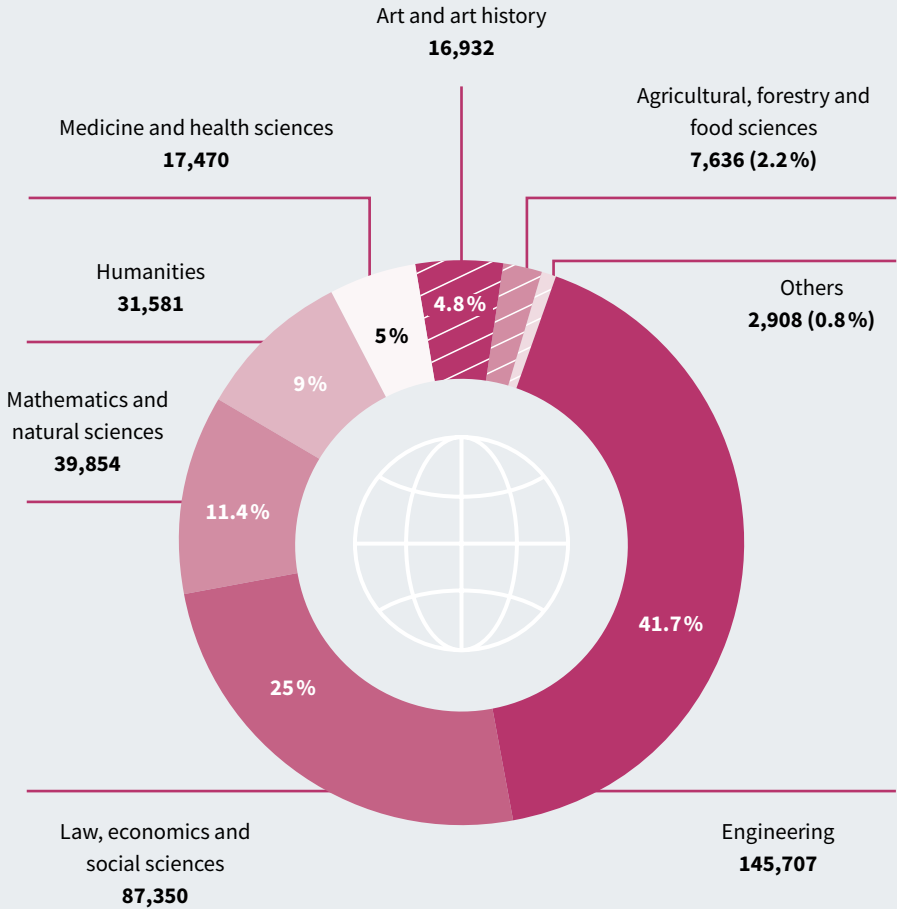


Key countries of origin for international students (2021/2022 winter semester)

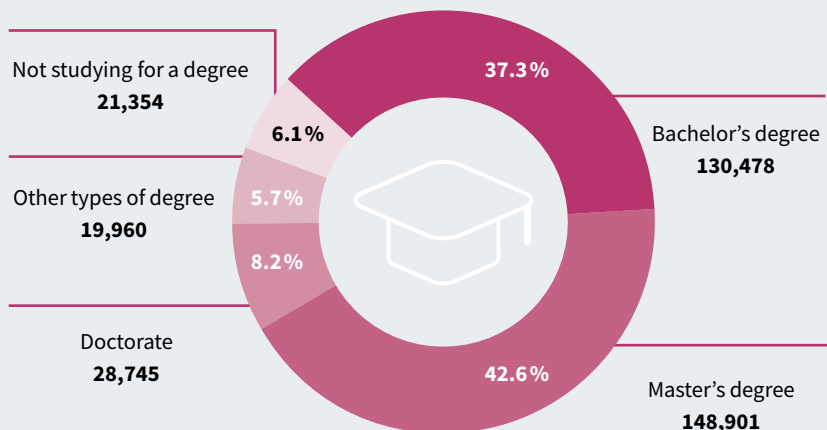


## THE NUMBERS: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN GERMANY

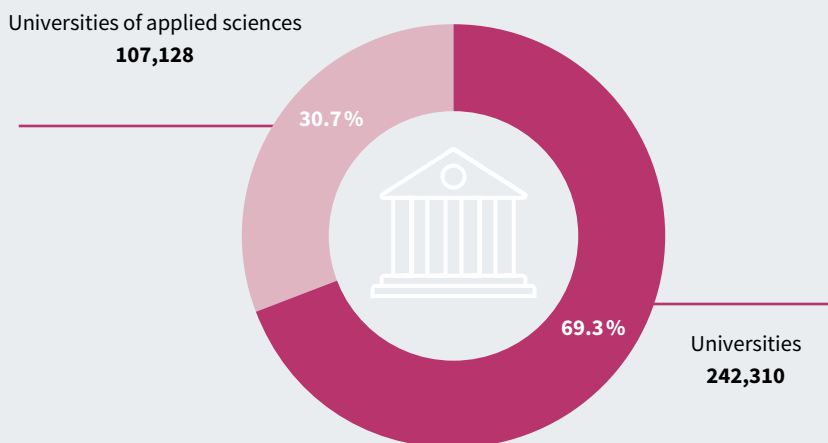
Most popular subject groups for international students  
(2021/2022 winter semester)



### International students, by type of degree (2021/2022 winter semester)



### International students, by type of higher education institution (2021/2022 winter semester)



## THE DAAD: GOALS, ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES

Since its foundation in 1925, the DAAD has supported some 2.9 million scholars in Germany and abroad. It is an association and its members are German higher education institutions and student bodies. Its activities go far beyond granting scholarships: the DAAD promotes the internationalisation of German higher education institutions, strengthens German studies and the German language abroad, supports developing countries in establishing efficient higher education institutions and advises on matters of education policy, foreign academic policy and development policy.

Its headquarters are in Bonn, and it maintains a Government Liaison Office in Berlin, to which the famous Artists-in-Berlin Program is closely affiliated. A network of regional offices, information centres and information points maintains contacts with key partner countries on all continents and provides local advice.

### DAAD programmes and objectives

‘Change by exchange’ describes the DAAD’s contribution to creating a global community which can find answers to the pressing questions of the future. The DAAD stimulates internationalisation and global responsibility. It is an independent mediator between different stakeholders and their interests. Those who bring about this transformation are the students and academics who transcend borders every day, and the higher education institutions who encourage them through their efforts.

Including EU programmes, the DAAD funded over 140,000 people around the world in 2022. The support it provides ranges from a year abroad for young students to full doctoral programmes, from work placements to visiting lectureships, and from fact-finding visits to developing higher education institutions abroad. The DAAD supports the international activities of German higher education institutions by providing marketing services, publications, events and training.



The DAAD realises its objectives across three **strategic fields of activity**:

1

**‘Recognising and supporting potentials worldwide’**

refers to help for individuals. Outstanding applicants from Germany and around the world at all academic levels get access to excellent education and research, subject-oriented professional training, and intercultural experiences.

2

**‘Strengthening the strategic academic network’**

focuses on higher education institutions in Germany and abroad. We help these institutions develop international partnerships, and provide support with academic networking and thereby make a contribution to solving global challenges.

3

**‘Providing expertise for international relations’**

places the DAAD as a pioneer in ongoing discussions around internationalisation at higher education institutions and in academia, as well as making it an actor in building decision-making processes in politics and civil society.

## ADDRESSES AND EXTERNAL LINKS

### BONN HEAD OFFICE OF THE GERMAN ACADEMIC EXCHANGE SERVICE (DAAD)

Kennedyallee 50  
53175 Bonn/Germany  
Tel. +49 (228) 882-0  
Fax +49 (228) 882-444  
postmaster@daad.de  
www.daad.de/en/

### BERLIN OFFICE

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
WissenschaftsForum am Gendarmenmarkt  
Markgrafenstraße 37  
10117 Berlin/Germany  
Tel. +49 (30) 20 22 08-0  
Fax +49 (30) 20 41 267

### DAAD OFFICES WORLDWIDE

You can find the contact details of our regional offices and information centres on the DAAD's website at [www.daad.de/en/the-daad/daad-network/](http://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/daad-network/).

### DETAILED INFORMATION ON STUDYING IN GERMANY

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

### STUDY PROGRAMMES AND STUDY IN GENERAL

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

### DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES/PHDS

- [www.research-in-germany.de/phd](http://www.research-in-germany.de/phd)
- [www.phdgermany.de/en/](http://www.phdgermany.de/en/)
- [www.gerit.org/en/](http://www.gerit.org/en/)  
(German Research Institutions)
- [www.dfg.de/gk/en](http://www.dfg.de/gk/en)  
(research training groups)
- [www.mpg.de/en/imprs](http://www.mpg.de/en/imprs) (International Max Planck Research Schools)
- [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes)

### STUDYING ONLINE

- [www.daad.de/study-programmes](http://www.daad.de/study-programmes)  
(search for 'distance studies')
- [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes)  
(Filter 'Mode of study')

### ADMISSIONS

- [www.daad.de/requirements](http://www.daad.de/requirements)
- [www.myguide.de/en/](http://www.myguide.de/en/)
- [www.anabin.de](http://www.anabin.de) (only in German)
- [www.daad.de/preparatory-courses/](http://www.daad.de/preparatory-courses/)
- [www.testas.de/en/index\\_en.htm](http://www.testas.de/en/index_en.htm)
- [www.hochschulkompass.de/studium-interessentest.html](http://www.hochschulkompass.de/studium-interessentest.html)  
(only in German)
- [www.studienwahl.de/themen-des-monats/testverfahren](http://www.studienwahl.de/themen-des-monats/testverfahren) (only in German)
- [www.global-assess.rwth-aachen.de/tu9/index.en.html](http://www.global-assess.rwth-aachen.de/tu9/index.en.html)

### TEST YOUR GERMAN

- [www.sprachnachweis.de](http://www.sprachnachweis.de)
- [www.testdaf.de](http://www.testdaf.de) (only in German)
- [www.goethe.de/en/spr/kup/tsd.html](http://www.goethe.de/en/spr/kup/tsd.html)
- [www.onset.de/en/language-placement-test-english-onset/](http://www.onset.de/en/language-placement-test-english-onset/)

**APPLYING**

- [www.daad.de/applying](http://www.daad.de/applying)
- [www.uni-assist.de/en/](http://www.uni-assist.de/en/)
- [www.hochschulstart.de](http://www.hochschulstart.de) (only in German)

**VISAS**

- [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en)
- [www.diplo.de/visa](http://www.diplo.de/visa)

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

- [www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de)
- [eu.daad.de](http://eu.daad.de) (only in German)
- [erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu](http://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu)
- [www.deutschlandstipendium.de/deutschlandstipendium/de/services/english/english\\_node.html](http://www.deutschlandstipendium.de/deutschlandstipendium/de/services/english/english_node.html)
- [www.fes.de/studienfoerderung](http://www.fes.de/studienfoerderung) (only in German)
- [www.kas.de/en/web/begabtenfoerderung-und-kultur/home](http://www.kas.de/en/web/begabtenfoerderung-und-kultur/home)
- [www.boell.de/en/scholarships](http://www.boell.de/en/scholarships)
- [www.freiheit.org](http://www.freiheit.org)
- [www.hss.de/stipendium](http://www.hss.de/stipendium) (in German only)
- [www.rosalux.de/en/foundation/studienwerk/study-scholarships](http://www.rosalux.de/en/foundation/studienwerk/study-scholarships)

**FINDING ACCOMMODATION**

- [www.daad.de/accommodation](http://www.daad.de/accommodation)
- [www.daad.de/accommodationfinder](http://www.daad.de/accommodationfinder)
- [www.jugendherberge.de/en/](http://www.jugendherberge.de/en/)
- [www.hostelbookers.com](http://www.hostelbookers.com)
- [www.wohnenfuerhilfe.info](http://www.wohnenfuerhilfe.info) (only in German)
- [www.internationale-studierende.de/en/prepare-your-studies/accommodation](http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/prepare-your-studies/accommodation)
- [www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de) (only in German)
- [www.immobilienscout24.de](http://www.immobilienscout24.de) (only in German)
- [www.immowelt.de](http://www.immowelt.de) (only in German)

**SUPPORT AND ADVICE**

- [www.daad.de/io](http://www.daad.de/io) (international offices)
- [www.internationale-studierende.de/en/](http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/) (German student unions)
- [www.study-in-germany.de/en/](http://www.study-in-germany.de/en/)
- [www.facebook.com/Study.in.Germany](https://www.facebook.com/Study.in.Germany)
- [www.instagram.com/study.in.germany\\_land.of.ideas/](https://www.instagram.com/study.in.germany_land.of.ideas/)
- [www.youtube.com/@StudyinGermany\\_de](https://www.youtube.com/@StudyinGermany_de)

**LEARNING GERMAN**

- [www.summerschools.de](http://www.summerschools.de)
- [www.goethe.de/en/](http://www.goethe.de/en/)
- [www.deutsch-uni.com/en/](http://www.deutsch-uni.com/en/)
- [learngerman.dw.com](http://learngerman.dw.com)
- [www.iwdl.de](http://www.iwdl.de) („Ich will Deutsch lernen“)
- [www.deutsch.info](http://www.deutsch.info)
- [www.pasch-net.de/lernmaterial](http://www.pasch-net.de/lernmaterial) (only in German)

**WORK PLACEMENTS**

- [www.daad.de/internship](http://www.daad.de/internship)
- [www.iaeste.de/en/](http://www.iaeste.de/en/)
- [www.aiesec.de](http://www.aiesec.de) (only in German)
- [traineeships.elsa.org](http://traineeships.elsa.org)

**WORKING DURING AND AFTER STUDY**

- [www.daad.de/job](http://www.daad.de/job)
- [www.study-in-germany.de/en/germany/everyday-life/work/](http://www.study-in-germany.de/en/germany/everyday-life/work/)
- [www.arbeitsagentur.de/en/](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/en/)
- [www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/](http://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/)
- [www.bamf.de/bluecard](http://www.bamf.de/bluecard)

**WIDER READING**

- [www.study-in-germany.de/en/community/](http://www.study-in-germany.de/en/community/)
- [www.daad.de/publications-germany/](http://www.daad.de/publications-germany/)

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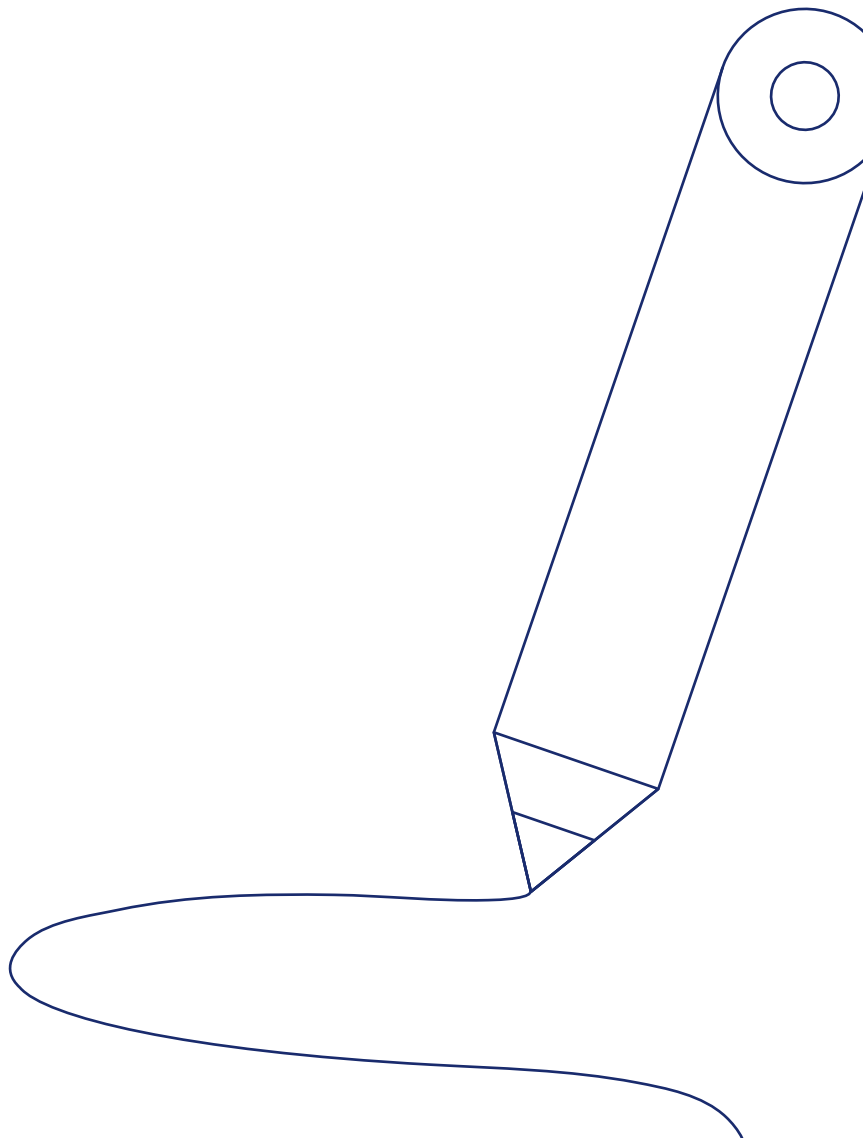
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