

## Living and Studying Costs (tuition fees)

Many German institutions of higher education can look back on a centuries-old tradition. The oldest university in Germany today was founded in Heidelberg in 1386. Until the Second World War German universities played a leading role internationally in many of the science and humanities disciplines. During the period of National Socialist rule, however, a large number of particularly distinguished academics were forced to leave the country and it took some time before the universities were able to regain their academic standing in the world. The unification of Germany brought together two diametrically opposed academic systems. Research and teaching in the new Länder have undergone a thorough structural change and now contribute significantly to the lively German economic scenario.

There are more than 300 institutions of higher education spread all over Germany, with no less than 82 universities, 136 Fachhochschulen and 46 colleges of music and fine arts. During the Winter semester 1994/95 almost 1.9 million students were registered, of whom 135,000 came from abroad and 220,000 were in their first-year. The spectrum of study options is extremely broad. Apart from the classic disciplines it is also possible to study mining in Germany; Lüneburg offers "Applied Cultural Studies", Cologne has an institute for media studies, while at Rostock you can study agricultural ecology, to name but a few subjects from the variegated pallet totalling 400 courses of study in all. In the last few years inter-disciplinary science and research have become significantly more important.

### How the Institutions are Structured

Since the time of Wilhelm von Humboldt the governing principle has been "the unity of research and teaching". Since the opening-up of the universities, however, with the resulting trend towards mass institutions, this ideal is only partially in line with the times. Aspects such as practical applicability and relevance to vocational requirements are constantly gaining in importance. This is particularly true at Fachhochschulen where the courses are shorter and the curriculum more tightly-organised than at the universities. Ever more new students are opting to study at Fachhochschulen. The "freedom of teaching and research" guarantees institutions the right to self-administration even if they are financed by the state. In the framework of the Higher Education Act of the respective Land they award themselves their own charters. Universities are headed by a Rector or President, several Pro-rectors or Vice-presidents, and a Chancellor. The Academic Senate is responsible for general affairs concerning research, teaching and studying. It is composed of elected representatives of all the members of the institution, ie. students and non-academic staff, too. The students elect their own Student Representation. Its various bodies are self-administrating and safeguard student rights with regard to higher education policy, as well as dealing with students' social and cultural interests.

### Where does teaching and research take place?

The individual disciplines are grouped together into faculties or departments (eg. the "Philosophical Faculty" or the "Department of Economics"). The faculties and departments are empowered to pass regulations governing studies and examinations. An elected Dean is in charge of faculty or departmental business.

Each subject has its own institute or "Seminar" (in Germany this word has a double meaning: a course and a department building or room). This will be the place you spend most of your time because this is where the teaching staff and other students are to be found. You will find literature on your subject in the "Seminar"-library, while general information on your course of study is available from the Departmental Student Organisation ("Fachschaft"). Queries about organisational matters can be addressed to the secretary's office.

#### Studying with Disabilities

The Information and Advice Centre on Studying with Disabilities (Informations- und Beratungsstelle Studium und Behinderung), which is run by the German National Association of Student Services Organisations (Deutsches Studentenwerk - DSW), provides advice to university applicants and students with disabilities or chronic illnesses as well as to their parents and counsellors on all questions relating to taking a course of higher education study. The centre also organises regular information events on how to start studying and on how to enter a career.

The Information and Advice Centre publishes a brochure in German called "**Studium und Behinderung**" which provides a comprehensive overview of all topics relating to studying with disabilities. The questions it answers include aspects such as university admissions, financing studies and additional, disability-related requirements, as well as areas such as the provisions available for compensating the disadvantages which students may experience during their studies and examinations, as well as aspects of studying abroad.

The DSW will be pleased to send the brochure to you at no cost upon request. Furthermore, the brochure and a list of the university and student services "Disabled Students Officers" responsible for questions relating to studying with disabilities - these are the local contacts at higher education institutions - can be downloaded from the DSW website at [www.studentenwerke.de/behinderung](http://www.studentenwerke.de/behinderung). The website also contains further information on events and topics of current interest or relevance.

For further questions please contact:

Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW)

Informations- und Beratungsstelle Studium und Behinderung

Monbijouplatz 11

D-10178 Berlin

Germany

Tel.: +49 (0)30/ 29 77 27-64

Fax: +49 (0)30/ 29 77 27-69

E-mail: [studium-behinderung@studentenwerke.de](mailto:studium-behinderung@studentenwerke.de)

Website: [www.studentenwerke.de/behinderung](http://www.studentenwerke.de/behinderung)

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You should allow a whole year (yes, that long!) to prepare your trip to Germany and should take account of the following points:

#### General questions

- Where can I study my subject or particular course (e.g. postgraduate studies) in Germany?  
Information at the [DAAD University Guide](#)
- What kind of institution of higher education is right for me?  
See [www.daad.de-type of university](#)
- How am I going to finance my studies?  
And how much money do I need to live on per month?  
See "[Costs, Fees, Scholarships and Funding](#)"
- What scholarships are available? What requirements do I have to meet in order to qualify for a scholarship? How do I apply?  
Information at [www.daad.de - scholarship database](#)
- Do I have to take the [DSH](#) (German language proficiency test)?  
Where can I take a German language course to prepare for the test?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution (ask for the study regulations for your chosen subject)
- Do I need any knowledge of other foreign languages (English or French or perhaps even Latin)?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution (ask for the study regulations for your chosen subject)
- Do I have to observe any closing dates or deadlines ?  
see "[Important dates](#)"
- If I want to study art, design, music, or sport, what are the dates of the aptitude tests?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution

#### For first-year students

- What are the entrance requirements for my chosen course of study?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution
- Do I have to take an entrance examination (Feststellungsprüfung) to be admitted and, if so, should I attend a preparatory course (Studienkolleg)?  
Information from [www.daad.de - admission requirements](#) and [www.studienkollegs.de](#) (german only)
- Do admissions restrictions apply for the subject of my choice? If so, where and when do I have to apply?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution and from [www.zvs.de](#) (german only)

#### For advanced students who want to extend their studies

- Which German higher education institutions offer the study opportunity I am looking for?  
Information at the [DAAD University Guide](#)
- In which semester will I be placed?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution
- How will the academic achievements I gain in Germany be recognised in my

own country?

Information available from your chosen German higher education institution

#### For graduates wishing pursue postgraduate studies

- Which institutions offer the postgraduate course I am interested in?  
Information at the [DAAD University Guide](#) – special graduate studies
- Do I fulfil the entrance requirements?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution
- What is the language of instruction in my chosen course?  
Information at the [DAAD University Guide](#) and from your chosen German higher education institution
- When does the academic year for my course begin?  
Information at the [DAAD University Guide](#) and from your chosen German higher education institution
- How many semesters will my course take?  
Information at the [DAAD University Guide](#) and from your chosen German higher education institution
- Which degree(s) can I gain? Are they recognised in my own country?  
Information at the [DAAD University Guide](#) and from your chosen German higher education institution

#### For doctoral/PhD students

- Is my degree recognised in Germany or do I have to fulfil any other conditions first?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution
  - Is there a professor at a German university willing to supervise my doctoral thesis or, alternatively, is there a suitable Graduate College (Graduierertenkolleg)?  
Information available from your chosen German higher education institution
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## Admission

Even if you have studied for a while in your home country, you still have to apply for admission to a degree course at the German institution of your choice. There are **three exceptions** to this rule:

1. Applications from DAAD scholarship holders are handled by the DAAD. These students do not have to seek preliminary admission from the university or college of their choice.
2. When the university of your choice is a member of the Admission Service ASSIST, you have to send your application via ASSIST ([more information can be found here](#)).
3. If you want to study a subject for which admissions restrictions apply throughout Germany (Numerus clausus - NC subject) and are a so-called educational national, i.e. you gained your higher education entrance qualification (Abitur, etc.) at a German school or at a recognised German school abroad, or if you are a national of a European Union country, then you can apply, like German nationals, to the Central Admissions Office at the address below:

**Zentralstelle für die Vergabe von Studienplätzen (ZVS),**  
Sonnenstr. 171  
D-44137 Dortmund,  
Germany  
Tel.: +49 231 1081-0  
Fax: +49 231 1081-277  
E-Mail: [poststelle@zvs.nrw.de](mailto:poststelle@zvs.nrw.de)  
[www.zvs.de](http://www.zvs.de)

**All other international students normally apply direct to the [International Office](#)** at the higher education institution of their choice. (Should another office be responsible for your application at the university or college, the International Office will advise you accordingly).

### Admission requirements

Please check our [admission requirements list](#), whether your secondary school-leaving certificate or your qualification for admission to higher education, respectively, is sufficient for direct admission to higher education institutions in Germany or if you will be required to take the [Assessment Test \(Feststellungsprüfung\)](#).

### Application form

for admission to studies for foreign applicants. Please note that some Higher Education Institutions in certain federal states of Germany (e.g. Bavaria) do not accept the application form you .

Please make sure before applying to a certain University or Fachhochschule that the application form will be accepted. You will find further information on the homepages

of the Higher Education Institutions.

**Please also note**, that you have to send your application via the **Admission Service ASSIST** when the university of your choice is a member of ASSIST

#### Restricted admissions

Certain subjects are so popular that there are not enough study places. German and international students are then subject to a selection process in which the average marks gained in the "Abitur" or the equivalent foreign higher education entrance qualification (in most cases the school leaving certificate) determine admission. There are disciplines subject to restricted admissions ("Numerus clausus") throughout Germany (e.g. medicine, pharmacology), while others are only subject to regional or local restrictions. Since great importance is attached to enabling foreign citizens to study at German institutions of higher education, a certain percentage of study places in restricted admissions subjects have been reserved for international applicants. See this as encouragement and go ahead and apply for these subjects as well.

#### Registration

As soon as you have received notification of admission ("Zulassungsbescheid") from the International Office ("Akademisches Auslandsamt") and taken the language test, you can register as a student at the respective institution of higher education (you will be given a registration number, "Matrikelnummer"). The notification of admission also tells you by when you should register. Please note that the deadlines are often short-term and that you usually have to appear in person! Registration takes place at the Registrar's or Admissions Office ("Studentensekretariat" or "Immatrikulationsamt"). The procedures differ from one institution to another, so get hold of a copy of the information leaflet from the Registrar's Office well in advance. This will tell you which documents you have to bring with you, eg. certificates, usually the originals with certified translations. In any case, apart from the notification of admission, you will have to produce a health insurance certificate ("Krankenversicherungsnachweis") unless you fall into one of the exceptional categories exempt from compulsory insurance cover.

Academic fees are not charged at German institutions of higher education, you will merely be required to pay a minimal social contribution ("Sozialgebühr") which can extend €50 depending on the institution, which will entitle you to a student identity card, a course record book (at universities), and several registration certificates ("Immatrikulationsbescheinigungen"). By registering and paying the social contribution at some institutions you become entitled to a so-called "Semester Ticket" which allows you to use public transport during the semester free of charge. The charge for the social contribution is increased accordingly. Now you are a certified student in Germany. The student identity card is usually a computer print-out, although some institutions have introduced an identity card (similar to a credit card) so that certain administrative procedures, such as registration renewal, course registration and library lending, merely involve inserting the card into a machine. You need the registration certificates when applying for student accommodation or for obtaining reduced-price fares from the transport companies.

#### Registration Renewal

Registration at German institutions of higher education is only valid for one semester. If you want to continue studying in Germany subsequently you have to submit a registration renewal declaration ("Rückmeldeerklärung") for the next semester to the Registrar's Office. This you will receive together with your course record book ("Studienbuch"). Similarly, each semester you will have to produce a

new insurance certificate from your health insurance agency and pay the social contribution (and the semester ticket where applicable). There are closing-dates for renewing registration which are posted in the Registrar's Office and contained in the university catalogue. Please note that you will be exmatriculated if you fail to renew your registration in time!

### Course Registration

With your course record book you will receive a registration sheet ("Belegbogen") for noting the lectures and seminars you have attended. You need it for registering for examinations, together with the course certificates ("Scheine"), proving you have taken part in the mandatory parts of your course. At many institutions (especially Fachhochschulen) the requirement to provide documentary evidence has been waived but the registration sheet can be very useful for informing your own institution at home what lectures and seminars you have attended abroad.

### Registering at Your Department

Just registering at the Registrar's Office is not always the end of the procedure. As a rule you will have to register in writing at your department or departments, too. Enquire at the secretary's office as early as possible whether and when you need to call there and which documents you should take with you. At registration you will receive a seminar card ("Seminarkarte") which you have to renew each semester. The seminar card can only be collected at specific times, too, and these will be posted in the department.

**N.B.:** Due to the fact that some courses are far too full many professors now require students to register for their lectures and seminars before the semester begins. When a certain number has been reached, registration is simply closed. So do enquire at the department well in advance to which courses this applies.

### International Student Identity Card / FIYTO Card / Deutsch-Französischer Sozialausweis

Well, as you are getting plenty of exercise running from one office to the next you might as well pop round to the Students' Union, AStA, or the Student Representation at your institution, to pick up an International Student Identity Card for about €4-6. It entitles you to reduced rate travel and entry tickets abroad. The FIYTO-Card (Federation of International Youth Travel Organisation) is also extremely useful. It offers a lot of reductions on foreign travel to students up to the age of 26. It is available from Student Services ("Studentenwerk") together with the Franco-German Social Card which entitles you to eat at French university restaurants and apply for accommodation in French student hostels during the recess.

### Important Dates

- The **academic year** comprises the winter semester (October, 1st to March, 31st) and the summer semester (April, 1st to September, 30th).
- Starting dates for the **courses** are usually April, 15th (summer semester) and October, 15th (winter semester). The dates vary from one institution and from one federal state to another. Precise dates in the Course Catalogue or at the Foreign Student Office.
- Closing date for **admissions applications** at the Foreign Student Office are July, 15th for the following winter semester and January, 15th for the following summer semester.
- Closing date at the **ZVS** in Dortmund is July, 15th for the following winter semester, and January, 15th for the following summer semester.
- The deadline for applications for the **Medical students' test** is September,

Finding your way in and through higher education in Germany can sometimes seem like negotiating a labyrinth. However, there are a considerable number of advisory services which can help you try to answer your questions and solve your problems. Do not hesitate to use them! And ask other German students, too.

#### The International Office (AAA)

As a foreign student or academic the first place to turn is always the International Office. In their capacity as part of the administration of the institution, the Foreign Student Offices are responsible for international relations with other institutions and hence for all related matters. In the run-up to your studies in Germany the staff will advise you on individual disciplines, courses (e.g. post-graduate studies), and admissions regulations. They will tell you about preparatory courses and about financing and planning what you want to do. To the best of their ability they will also help you during your stay in Germany to deal with bureaucratic formalities, offer you legal support, if needed, and assist you, as far as possible, in finding accommodation. They are the ones to advise you on housing problems, they allocate places in student hostals and can sometimes even help you to find private accommodation via the accommodation service.

Get into contact with the International Office of the institution you have chosen in Germany at least 6 months, if not a year before you want to start studying, and find out all you want to know about your planned course of study in Germany.

[This is where you can search for the addresses of your AAA.](#)

As a rule application for admission should be made to the AAA (the procedure for DAAD scholarship holders, however, is through the DAAD). Closing dates for application are usually 15 July for the Winter semester (WS) and 15 January for the Summer semester (SS). For disciplines with locally restricted admission application should also be made through the International Office. The latter is similarly responsible for foreigners in disciplines with generally restricted admission, with one exception: nationals from European Union states, who have the same status as Germans, and so-called educational nationals (i.e. foreigners who have gained their higher education entrance qualification in Germany), should apply through the Central Admissions Office ([ZVS](#)) in Dortmund.

Many Foreign Student Offices hold orientation meetings for foreign students a week or two before the semester begins and you should certainly take part. You will receive an invitation at admission.

The Registrar's Office



This is where admission takes place for the so-called educational nationals (see above) and for foreigners who have already qualified at an institution of higher education in Germany; it is also where registration is administered. Here you can get information about the conditions and formalities governing registration, important dates, course registration requirements, registration certificates, etc. Ask for the information sheet.

#### Central Academic Counselling

The institution's Central Academic Counselling and the departmental or faculty Subject Advice services are responsible for dealing with study-related enquiries and individual problems. Subject Advice is usually offered within the departments by assistants from the departments. You can get important information on your particular subject and any special features thereof, recommended books, advice on specialization and many other aspects.

#### Student Services

Student Services deal with the social affairs of the student body and especially the construction of student accommodation and educational assistance. Occasionally student services award loans to students who have got into financial straits through no fault of their own.

#### The Psychological Advisory Service

The task of the Psychological Advisory Service is to help students in crisis situations. The most frequent problems are learning difficulties, fear of examinations, loneliness caused by the mass institution, and depression. Of course, your name and problem will be treated strictly confidentially. You can find the address of the Psychological Advisory Service in your Study Guide or obtain it from Student Services (cf. above) or AStA.

#### The Trainees's Office

If you wish or are supposed to participate in practical training during your studies in Germany the Trainees's Office will give you information on work placements. Apart from this, you can turn to the Foreign Student Office, the AEGEE, AIESEC, and IAESTE as well as to the Carl-Duisberg-Gesellschaft for assistance with work placements.

#### The Examinations Office

There are two types of examinations: state and academic. The state examination qualifies the candidate to enter the civil service or state monitored professions (e.g. dispensing chemists, doctors, teachers, lawyers). If you are seeking information on state examinations the Examinations Office is the first place you should go to find out about getting previous studies recognised, what proof is required, registration deadlines etc.

For the so-called academic examinations, i.e. the examinations set by the institution, it is the Dean's Office of the relevant faculty which is responsible. Academic examinations include diplomas, master's degrees and doctorates.

#### Student Representations

In general it can be said that the various offices of the Student Representations are always good places to go because here you will be advised by fellow-students who have experienced many of your own problems themselves. The Students' Union (AStA) is the students' elected executive body and represents students' interests vis-

vis-à-vis the institution of higher education, the government and other institutions. It is usually divided into various sections (social section, cultural section, foreign student section etc.). You can turn to the relevant sections with questions concerning the search for accommodation, opportunities for meeting people and leisure activities at your institution, International Student Identity Cards, and job-hunting. Apart from this, the AStA organises a car-sharing system and typing courses, produces internal institutional brochures and can get hold of cheap-rate theatre tickets. As you can see, it is worth taking the time to go round there.

#### The Departmental Student Organisation ("Fachschaft")

This organisation is composed of students from one specific discipline who represent the students' interests vis-à-vis the relevant department. At the beginning of the semester members of the organisation advise first-semester students on embarking on their studies, examinations, any questions about the subject, literature etc. The Departmental Student Organisation will be pleased to welcome you as a new member. However, some organisations also pursue political objectives which is not always what you will be looking for.

#### Orientation Programmes for first-semester students

Even if you are not a first-semester student the orientation meetings held by the individual departments and the AStA are an ideal way of breaking the ice at your new institution of higher education! At some institutions the Departmental Student Organisation even runs a whole "orientation week". Apart from a lot of important information you can make contact directly with other students. The orientation meetings usually take place a week or so before the beginning of the semester - ask at the Departmental Student Organisation or at the AStA!

The standard of living in the Federal Republic of Germany is high and, consequently, so too are the costs and expenses needed to be able to share in that standard. Based on the 1999 index, you should reckon with monthly expenses totalling at least € 665 in the old regional states (west) €537 in the new regional states (east). You will find that this will allow you only a very modest lifestyle.

Normally state-maintained **higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees**. However, there are several costs, listed below, which arise through studying.

#### Proof of Financial Means

Most foreign students study in Germany without a scholarship or grant. Hence, you are strongly advised to assess your own financial means early and realistically. The German foreign missions or aliens registration authorities must be convinced that you have sufficient financial means at your disposal to cover your cost of living for your whole study duration in Germany. This section will give you a breakdown of the **cost of living of around €665,-** in the old regional states (west) and €537,- in the new regional states (east).

#### No Chance for Working Students

You must not plan on financing your studies by working in Germany. The German authorities adhere strictly to the employment legislation applicable to foreign students in Germany. Any violation may lead to immediate expulsion from Germany. Although students from EU countries may work in Germany, jobs are hard to find. Scholarship holders and foreign students who are not citizens of an EU country may

only earn a kind of pocket-money; such work is carefully monitored. Please ensure that you give serious consideration to the proof of financial means (for more information visit the "[Jobs](#)" page in this section).

#### Contributions to the Studentenwerk (Sozialgebühren)

Each university has a Studentenwerk, a student services organisation, which provides social facilities, such as the student refectory, cafes, student halls of residence and sports facilities. All students pay social contributions for the use of these facilities. At present this amounts to between €18 and €46 per semester. In addition to collecting the Studentenwerk contributions, some higher education institutions also collect a payment of up to around €92, depending on the respective town, for the so-called Semester Ticket, which entitles students to free-of-charge use of local public transport in and around their university town for six months.

Over and above these costs, the regional states of Berlin and Baden-Württemberg have additionally introduced a so-called administration fee or respectively registration fee. This amounts to €51 per semester (as per 2000).

#### Health Insurance

All students are entitled to **compulsory statutory health insurance cover** until completion of their 14th full semester, but only up to a maximum age of 30. If you meet these timing conditions, this has the positive consequence that the statutory health insurance funds must insure you at student rates. Apart from a minor personal contribution (excess) which you must pay, this health insurance covers medical fees for visiting a doctor, hospital expenses, and any prescribed medication. The student rates for statutory health insurance currently amount to about €281 per semester (six months). This sum already includes the premium for nursing care insurance (Pflegeversicherung) which has been introduced in Germany. You must pay your premiums to the health insurance fund before registering at your higher education institution.

If you are older than 30 years of age on the date of arrival in Germany, you are strongly advised to insure yourself with a private health insurance company, since medical fees and hospital expenses are very high in Germany. For example, just one day in hospital will cost an average of around €205.

For information on insurance questions, please contact the [foreign student office](#) or the general local health insurance fund (the so-called AOK - Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse) or another health insurance company of your choice. The section "[Germany](#)" on this page contains further useful information.

#### Health Test

If you require an entry visa, the [local German embassy or consulate](#) will advise you of whether or not you must take a medical test in your home country, i.e. present a health certificate. Germany's legislation on foreigners does not prescribe a medical test by a German physician. If you wish to extend your residence permit in Germany, then you will find that the individual federal regional states differ in their regulations regarding health tests. The state aliens' registration authority at your place of study will be able to provide information on this aspect.

#### Accident Insurance

All students are insured against accidents at, on their way to or from their university by the statutory accident insurance scheme. You can turn to the foreign student office for information on additional accident insurance coverage.

### Study Materials

Further costs arise, for example, for the purchase of books and study materials. Depending on the discipline studied, these can easily amount to between €230 and €307 and more per semester. Furthermore, most degree courses today are inconceivable without the use of a personal computer (PC). However, if you do not have your own PC at your disposal, most faculties, schools and departments, or the computer centre, will have a pool of university computers available for use.

### Travelling

Before booking your ticket to Germany, you should inquire at various travel agencies about price reductions or other special rates for students.

### Scholarships and Funding

German institutions of higher education generally do not themselves award any scholarships. There is, therefore, little or no point in submitting a scholarship application (Stipendienantrag) to the university.

There are, however, several scholarship awarding organisations. The most extensive scholarship programme is that offered by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). However, only advanced students may apply for DAAD-scholarships, or depending on country of origin and subject, in some cases only graduates. Other scholarship awarding institutions have varying conditions, for example, regarding country of origin, subject, previous study achievements, duration of support, etc.

Support for a full study programme, that is from the first semester to completion of studies, is not possible through the DAAD and is also extremely rare among other scholarship organisations.

Scholarships are primarily awarded on the basis of achievement criteria. The applicant's financial circumstances only play a subordinate role. The German foreign diplomatic missions and other German representatives abroad such DAAD-foreign language assistants (Lektors), lecturers and professors placed on assignment abroad by the DAAD and the DAAD's offices abroad will provide information on the possibilities of gaining a scholarship. They will all give you information on application requirements and deadlines and will also inform you as to where the application has to be submitted.