

STUDYING IN GERMANY

A comprehensive
guide



eXpatrio

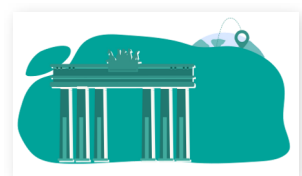
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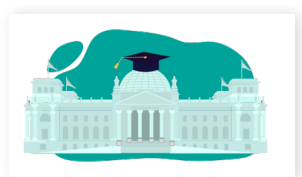
Find out what this ebook is all about.



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Enjoy your relocation to Germany now that you have our informative guide.

Introduction

German universities have an excellent reputation and offer optimal conditions for successful studies. In this guide, you will learn everything you need to know about the German higher education landscape; from the types of universities to the grading system.

With this comprehensive information, Expatrio supports you in finding your way to a German university.



Secure
everything you
need to study in
Germany.



Why is Germany a popular study destination?

Germany is the the most popular non-English speaking host countries for international students. (DAAD, 2023)

According to the OECD, it is the **third most popular destination country worldwide**. And according to [DAAD](#) and [DZHW](#) (Wissenschaft Weltoffen), it is the **most popular non-English-speaking study country**. Let's take a look at the reasons behind Germany being so popular among international students!

1 No-tuition fees at public universities

In Germany, international students at most public universities do not have to pay tuition fees. Instead, it is customary to pay a so-called *Semesterbeitrag* (semester fee) at the beginning of each semester, which can range from €65 to €230. The semester fee includes a semester ticket that allows students to use public transportation in their city or even across the whole region at a low cost. This is how the *Semesterbeitrag* is calculated:



Semester ticket for public transportation



Contribution to the student council



Social contribution for the *Studentenwerk* (student union)



Possible additional fees to cover administrative costs

2 Affordable tuitions at private universities

Even private universities can have very affordable tuition fees. On average, a Bachelor's degree at a private university comes at the cost of €520 **per month**. This makes studying at a private university in Germany more expensive than at a public institution, but often the undeniable advantages of a private university - such as individual support, modern equipment and close connections with the business world - make the additional investment worthwhile.

3 High-quality education and world-recognized degrees

German universities offer an outstanding level of teaching and research that is among the best in the world. The government systematically promotes this with funding projects such as the so-called [*Exzellenzstrategie*](#) (excellence strategy), which is designed to ensure that German universities are internationally oriented, world-class research institutions.

Germany also has an excellent reputation for top-notch degree programs in engineering and other technical subjects. A staggering [42% of international students](#) in Germany are enrolled in engineering degree programs. No wonder a degree from a German university is recognized worldwide and opens up excellent opportunities on the job market.



4 Wide range of courses

The range of courses on offer is huge, allowing students to focus on exactly what they want to study. The practical relevance of the study options also makes the offer to study in Germany particularly attractive. In many courses, theory and practice are closely intertwined, not least because many universities work directly with companies. This happens, for example, through research collaborations or joint events with companies that accompany students' entry into the professional world.



5 English-taught programs

(and German too, of course)

German universities have significantly expanded their range of foreign language and international degree programs in recent years.

While there are still many German-language degree programs, there are more than 1,500 English-taught courses at universities in Germany. So, it is very possible to complete an entire study program if you only speak English.



6 Affordable costs and high standards of living

In Germany, costs of living are very affordable and the standard of living is very high. The average net household income in 2023 is €42,192.

Germany is among the top 5 OECD countries in terms of health spending. This high level of funding ensures above-average access to healthcare services in Germany. There is easily accessible infrastructure, a high number of health professionals, and a large share of the costs is covered by the insurance systems.



7 Great job opportunities

Germany has the largest economy in Europe and the fourth-largest in the world, so there are many jobs in the country for internationals with specialized skills.

Germany also has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU, at 5.7% as of 2023. This is well below the Eurozone average of 6.5%.

If you have a university degree or professional qualification, work experience and speak at least some German, you have a very good chance of finding a job in Germany.



1 Private and public universities

Universities in Germany generally offer an extensive range of subjects.

Public universities have the right to award doctorates and serve both research and teaching. Universities, which are usually much larger than universities of applied sciences, can offer more specialized courses.

No tuition fees are charged at most public universities. In contrast, studying at private universities in Germany always involves tuition fees.

Private universities have become a serious alternative to public universities in Germany. This is because one of the major advantages of most private universities is the higher quality of student support. The number of students per teacher is usually significantly lower than at public universities, which allows for a more intensive supervision of students. The strong practical orientation of private universities is particularly appreciated by companies, which could be your potential employers.

2 Types of universities

Public and private higher education in Germany is provided by two types of universities:

Universities

Offer the full range of academic disciplines. Traditionally, the focus at German universities has been particularly on research, so that advanced studies are primarily theoretical and research-oriented. The oldest German university is Heidelberg University, established in 1386.



Universities of Applied Sciences

Concentrate their study programs on engineering and technical subjects, business subjects, social work and design. The mission of applied research and development implies a clear practical orientation, as well as job-related focus. This often includes integrated and supervised internships in industry, companies or other relevant institutions.

3 Types of degrees

The various courses of study at German universities and universities of applied sciences can be completed with different examinations and academic degrees:

Bachelor's:

Bachelor's degree programs teach scientific fundamentals, methodological competence and qualifications related to the professional field. A Bachelor's degree in Germany is awarded after 3 to 4 years of study.



Master's:

The Master's degree is a second university degree, usually taking a further 1 to 2 years. Master's degree programs can be differentiated according to the profile types "application-oriented" and "research-oriented."

Doctorate:

Universities in Germany and equivalent institutions of higher education are eligible to award doctorates. The formal requirement for admission to doctoral studies is a qualified Master's degree (universities of applied sciences and universities) or an equivalent foreign degree.

4 Academic year in Germany

The academic year in Germany is divided into summer and winter semesters. One year consists of 2 semesters.

At German universities, the winter semester (WS) is when most degree programs begin. It generally lasts from the October to the end of March. The summer semester (SS) usually begins in April and finishes at the end of September.



Private universities are usually more flexible with their semester starting dates. The semesters include lecture periods and lecture-free periods. The exact dates vary from year to year. The WS lecture period begins around mid-October and ends in early/mid-February. The summer semester lecture period begins in mid-April and ends in mid-late July.

5 Grading system and graduation criteria

The German grading scale generally comprises 5 grades (intermediate grades may also be awarded): "Very good" (1), "Good" (2), "Satisfactory" (3), "Sufficient" (4), "Not sufficient" (5). The grade "Sufficient" (4) and above is required to pass.

In order to successfully complete their studies, students in Germany usually have to write a thesis at the end of their program. This mainly applies to Bachelor's and Master's degrees. At many universities, it is also possible to complete a course of study without an exam by writing a doctoral thesis. In contrast to



a regular thesis, which is written under the guidance of university instructors and is usually only intended to reflect the current state of research, a doctoral thesis is an independent work of science that is required to provide a research-based increase in knowledge on the subject.

At a college of art or music, it may also be possible to complete a course of study without writing a thesis in exchange for proof of practical experience. In all other cases, a thesis is usually mandatory. The main aim here is to ensure the quality and comparability of degree programs and degrees.

6 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is part of the [Bologna Process](#), which **ensures a standardized higher education system across Europe**. ECTS credits relate to the workload necessary to complete a given study program, like a Bachelor's or Master's degree. In general, one year of full-time study is worth 60 [ECTS](#) credits. A single study module is generally worth 3 to 6 ECTS points, depending on the workload. For example, to obtain a Master's degree with a designated study time of 2 years, you usually must complete 120 ECTS credits total.



7 Attendance at German universities

Mandatory attendance at public universities in Germany is not uniformly regulated. The regulations on compulsory attendance can differ from university to university and even from subject to subject.

Lectures are usually exempt from mandatory attendance. Seminars are also often exempt from compulsory participation. This is usually specified in the examination regulations or the module description. Only practical exercises, internships, language courses and laboratory hours are usually directly declared as compulsory courses.

8 How to find a study program in Germany?

As you can see, there are countless opportunities to study in Germany.

You are definitely spoiled for choice! Maybe you already know which city you want to move to? Then you can search for suitable universities and study programs there. Or do you have a certain course of study in mind, but don't yet know where you want to study it?

You can use our [Study Finder](#) to find the university that best fits your individual needs! Simply filter by city, major or degree to find the ideal study program for you!



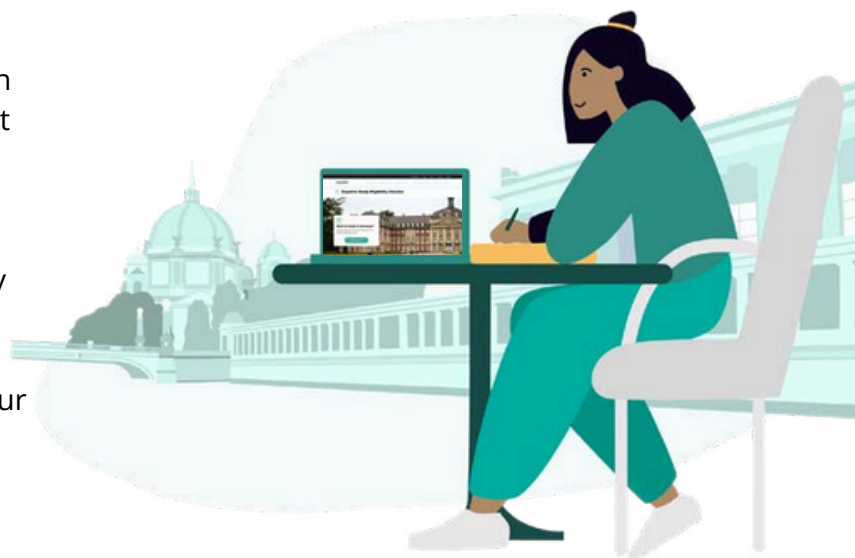
Applying to German university

Applying to a German university involves some research and perhaps challenges. We would like to give you an overview of the most important steps to make it easier for you:

1 Check your eligibility with our Study Eligibility Checker

First, you need to check whether you can be admitted to your desired university at all. The best way to do this is to use our [Study Eligibility Checker](#).

If you meet all the criteria, you can apply directly to the university. If not, you may attend a preparatory course (or [Studienkolleg](#)) to prepare for entering your desired university in Germany.



2 Academic year in Germany

Once you have decided on a particular university and a field of study, you should find out about the [application requirements](#) and restrictions of the university in question (application requirements for German universities often vary from state to state and even from university to university).

In most cases, you will need to provide proof of language proficiency, confirming sufficient knowledge of German or English. Many Bachelor's programs in Germany



are only offered in German, but for Master's programs it is easier to find an international program.

Master's, however, often have a different hurdle. In certain fields, such as business programs, you may need a valid [GMAT](#) test or a [GRE](#) test.

3 Check and gather necessary documents

In order to send exactly the right documents to the university, you can also contact the International Office (*Akademisches Auslandsamt*) of your chosen university before filling out the application.

In general, you will need the following documents:

- A completed application form for the study program
- Your certificate of higher education entrance qualification (*Hochschulzugangsberechtigung* - HZB)

- Proof of a Bachelor's degree is required for Master's degree programs
- A passport photo
- A copy of your passport
- Certified copies of language certificates and other academic tests

Depending on the program, you may also need to submit a letter of motivation and/or a letter of recommendation.

Tip: It might be necessary to translate your documents if they are not in English or German. **Be sure to obtain an official translation.**

4 Get a language certificate

If you do not yet have a language certificate, you can acquire one. If you want to take a German test, you can either take the [DSH](#) test or the [TestDAF](#) as those are usually accepted by most German universities.

There are many English proficiency tests and you can choose the one that suits you best. It is also possible that the university requires a specific test. So, it is better to do some research before you decide on a test (this also applies to the German language certificate). The most common English tests are [IELTS](#), [TOEFL](#), or the [Cambridge](#) exams.



5 Fill out the forms & submit application

Don't forget to fill out all the forms that the university requires you to submit.

Have you double checked everything? Now it's finally time to submit your application!

After submitting your application, there may be further steps. For example, an interview or even sending your application by mail. So keep an eye on your mailbox and prepare to send in further documents.

6 Get your acceptance letter

Most likely, you will have to wait a few weeks until your admission letter arrives. Normally, you will receive it by e-mail and also by mail.

Once your application has been successful, you can begin the process of obtaining your German student visa.

Find out more about this topic in the upcoming pages.



Securing your German student visa

If you've made it this far then the first half of the whole **"Relocate to Germany"**-process is done! You have received your admission letter and secured a spot at a university of your choice in Germany!

Now, there is one more important step to complete: **the student visa for Germany**. To make sure this goes smoothly, we have created a **brief checklist** for you with **the most important things you should keep in mind**:

1 Book an appointment at the relevant German Mission

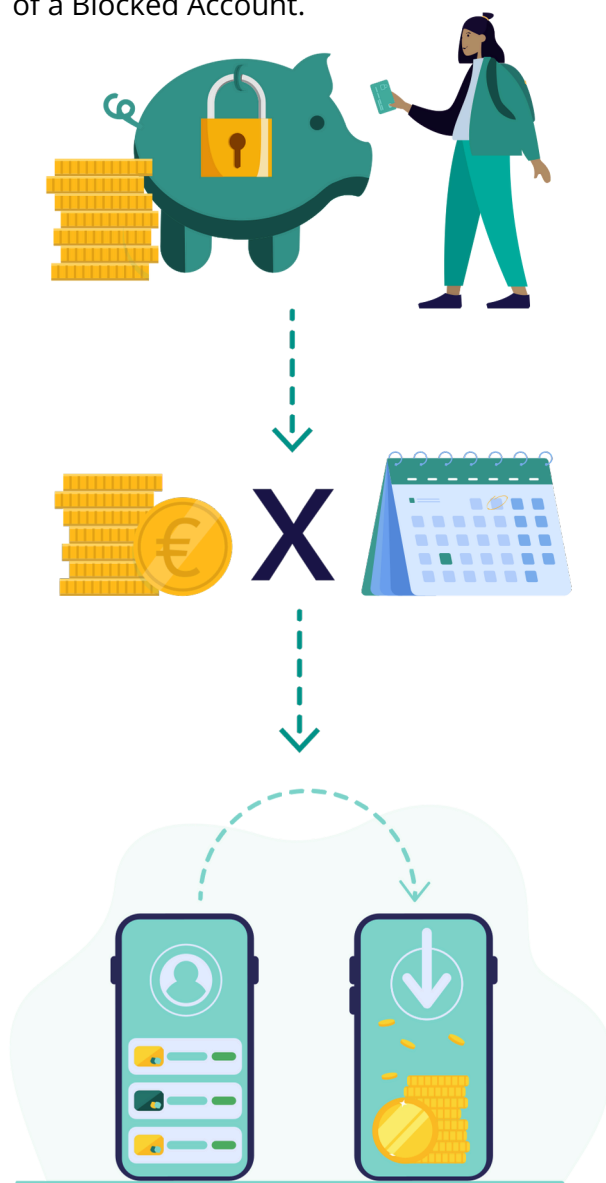
The first step is to arrange an appointment at the relevant German Mission in your home country.

2 Gather your documents

Next, you need to prepare the necessary documents for your visa application. You can usually find the list of required documents on the website of the German Embassy or Consulate.

3 Open a Blocked Account

An important requirement for the issuance of a visa to study in Germany is that your livelihood (your finances) is secured for the duration of your studies. You can prove this in the form of a Blocked Account.



What is a Blocked Account?

A **Blocked Account** (*Sperrkonto*) is a special account that the holder cannot freely take money out of. It works as proof of financial resources for people applying for a visa or residence permit for their stay in Germany.

The main groups of people required to have a Blocked Account are students, language students, job seekers, and basically everyone whose stay in the country is not supported by external sources such as salary or scholarship.

For a Blocked Account to be sufficient proof of funds, it must contain the minimum amount required by law - in 2024 the amount increased to €992 for each month you wish to stay in Germany. This means, if you want to stay in Germany for 12 months, $€992 \times 12 (= €11,904)$ must be paid into the account when opening it.

This amount remains blocked until you arrive in Germany. Once you arrive, you activate your account and begin receiving monthly payouts.

You will receive your blocked amount each month into your current bank account.

4 Get health insurance

Proof of health insurance is mandatory for enrollment at a German university. Most international students in Germany can insure themselves with public (also known as statutory) health insurance. **Students under 30 pay a monthly discounted rate of about €120 to have access to the healthcare system.**

Why do you need it?

Why exactly is health insurance so important? Because it is required by law and without it you will not get an *Aufenthaltstitel* (residence permit) in Germany. However, it can be a bit tricky because as an international in Germany you might not have access to statutory health insurance straight away. This can be the case, for example, if you arrive in Germany before the official start of your studies or if you first attend a preparatory language course (*Studienkolleg*).



Value Package!

This is why we offer you one of the best options for an easy start in Germany.

Our **Value Package** is all-inclusive and saves you time and money during your relocation process. Open your Blocked Account directly and will be covered by health insurance from day one!

The combination of Blocked Account, health insurance bundle (incoming/travel health insurance and either private or public health insurance), and your current bank account is all you need for your new life in Germany.

Conclusion



Relocate to Germany :)

We hope our guide has helped you make the decision to finally relocate to Germany! Now you also have a good starting point and informative guidance even if you are already in the middle of your application process to study in the country!

Here's to a successful move to your favorite German city and university! Cheers!



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