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Studying in Germany — Application, Costs and Tips for Foreigners

How to study in Germany: types of universities, admission, costs, financing and residence status.

Deutsche Begriffe: Studium | Universität | Fachhochschule | Immatrikulation | Semesterbeitrag | BAföG | Studentenvisum

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Why Study in Germany?

Germany is one of the most popular study destinations worldwide — and for good reasons:

- **No tuition fees** at public universities (only semester contribution)
- **High quality** — many universities in international rankings
- **International programmes** — over 1,800 English-language degree programs
- **Residence rights** — 18 months job search permitted after graduation
- **Good job market** — shortage of skilled workers in many sectors

Types of Universities

Universität (Uni)

- **Research-focused** — much theory, scientific work
- **Degrees:** Bachelor (6–8 semesters), Master (2–4 semesters), Doctorate (Dr.)
- **Study programmes:** all fields of study, including medicine, law, teaching
- Examples: TU Munich, Uni Heidelberg, Humboldt University Berlin

Fachhochschule (FH) / Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften (HAW)

• **Practice-oriented** — many projects, mandatory internships

• **Degrees:** Bachelor, Master

• **Study programmes:** engineering, business administration, computer science, social work, design

• Smaller groups, more personal supervision

Duales Studium

• Combination of **study and work** in a company

• **Remuneration** from employer (€800–1,500/month)

• High workload, but **practical experience from day one**

Admission and Application

Requirements

1. Hochschulzugangsberechtigung (HZB) — Your foreign school certificate must be recognized

• Check on **anabin.kmk.org** whether your certificate is recognized

• If not: **Studienkolleg** (1 year preparation + entrance exam)

2. Language certificate

• German-language programmes: **TestDaF** (TDN 4) or **DSH** (level 2)

• English-language programmes: **IELTS** (6.0–6.5) or **TOEFL** (80–100)

3. Possibly entrance exam — e.g. for medicine (TMS), art (portfolio), music (audition)

Application Deadlines

Semester	Deadline
Winter semester (October)	15 July (international applicants often 15 June)
Summer semester (April)	15 January

Where to Apply

• **uni-assist** (uni-assist.de) — central application office for many universities (fee: €75 + €30 per additional university)

• **Directly at the university** — some universities accept applications directly

• **Hochschulstart** (hochschulstart.de) — for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy

Costs

Semester Contribution

At public universities there are **no tuition fees** (exception: Baden-Württemberg charges €1,500/semester for non-EU students). The **Semesterbeitrag** (€150–400) covers:

• **Semester ticket** (public transport in the region)

• **Studentenwerk** (cafeteria, counselling, student housing)

• **AStA** (student representation)

Cost of Living

Item	Cost/month
Rent (shared flat/dorm)	€300–600
Food	€200–300
Health insurance	€110–120 (student insurance)
Learning materials	€30–50
Internet/mobile	€20–40
Transport (often in semester ticket)	€0–50
Leisure	€50–100
Total	**approx. €850–1,200**

Blocked Account for Studentenvisum

For the **Studentenvisum** you must demonstrate a **blocked account** with at least **€11,904** (€992/month × 12). You can withdraw a maximum of €992 per month from this.

Providers: **Expatrio**, **Fintiba**, **Deutsche Bank**

Financing

BAföG (Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz)

- **Who?** Students up to 45 years old with certain residence status
- **How much?** Max. **€934/month** (maximum rate 2025/26)
- **Repayment:** 50% as interest-free loan (max. €10,010), rest is a gift
- **Application:** at your university's Studierendenwerk

Important for foreigners: You receive BAföG only with certain residence statuses (e.g. Niederlassungserlaubnis, after 15 months with Aufenthaltserlaubnis, as recognized refugee).

Scholarships

- **DAAD** (daad.de) — largest German scholarship organization for foreigners
- **Deutschlandstipendium** — €300/month, merit-based
- **Foundations** — Studienstiftung, Heinrich-Böll, Konrad-Adenauer, Friedrich-Ebert and others
- **Stipendienlotse** (stipendienlotse.de) — scholarship search engine

Part-time Work

- As a student you may work **120 full days** or **240 half days** per year
- As **Werkstudent** (max. 20 h/week during lecture period): reduced social contributions
- **Minijob** (€603/month): tax-free, no social contributions for you
- During **semester breaks**: unlimited work permitted

Residence Status for Studies

Studentenvisum (§ 16b AufenthG)

- **Before entry** apply at the German embassy
- **Duration:** initially 1–2 years, extendable for study duration + max. 10 years
- **Requirements:** admission, proof of financing, health insurance
- **Part-time work permitted** (120/240 days)

After Graduation

- **18 months Aufenthaltserlaubnis for job search** (§ 20 AufenthG)
- Then: **Aufenthaltserlaubnis for employment** (§ 18b AufenthG)
- After 2 years: possibility of **Blue Card EU** or **Niederlassungserlaubnis**

Health Insurance

Up to age 30 (or 14th semester): **student statutory health insurance** (approx. €110–120/month). After that: voluntary insurance (approx. €200–250/month).

Tip: Arrange insurance **before registration** — without health insurance certificate you cannot enroll!

Tips for International Students

1. **Apply early** — especially for popular programmes and student housing
2. **Learn German** — even for English-language programmes, German helps in daily life
3. **Student housing** — cheaper than shared flats, apply via Studierendenwerk
4. **Buddy programmes** — many universities offer mentoring for international students
5. **AStA and Fachschaft** — student groups help with problems
6. **Internships** — use mandatory internships to gain professional experience