

Germany

Brief Background

In 2013, the [German Academic Exchange Service](#) (DAAD) launched its Strategy 2020 campaign, which included the goal of hosting at least 350,000 international students in Germany by 2020. Toward that end, Germany's public universities offer more than 2,000 degree programs taught in English, though most are at the graduate level. In 2017, Germany reached the goal set in Strategy 2020; it hosted 358,900 foreign students, 5,839 of whom were US students.

DAAD's commitment to the internationalization of its higher education landscape was further discussed in the organization's recently released [2025 strategy](#). The strategy aims to improve the academic success of international students so that they may be as successful as their German peers. With this, DAAD is committed to shaping foreign science policy and expanding international university relations in the 2020s. The strategy builds on the strength of the German university and science system: partnership, freedom of science, and a commitment to the joint solution to pressing global issues.

Germany is home to more than 427 state-accredited universities in 180 towns and cities countrywide, of which 120 are private institutions. There are three types of higher education institutions in Germany: universities; universities of applied sciences; and colleges of art, film, and music. Universities offer strong theoretical and academically oriented degree programs in a broad range of disciplines. Instruction at universities of applied sciences is very practice-oriented and internships are an integral part of the degree program. Colleges of art, film, and music are for students who want to develop their artistic talents, and instruction at most of these institutions is in German only.

Subjects popular among international students include economics and business administration, Germanic studies, electrical engineering, computer science, and music. In 2016, approximately one-third of all international students studied at the undergraduate level, though this increases to more than 60 percent at universities of applied sciences.



Good to Know

More than 90 percent of all university students in Germany, domestic and international, are enrolled in public universities, where they must choose and specialize in a specific course of study when they first apply. Students pursuing a bachelor's degree can complete their studies in six to eight semesters. Undergraduate programs in Germany are very structured in terms of course selection, when compared with programs at many American liberal arts colleges.

Students are encouraged to study the German language even if they enroll in English-taught programs.

Photo courtesy of Riley Newman-Gatton



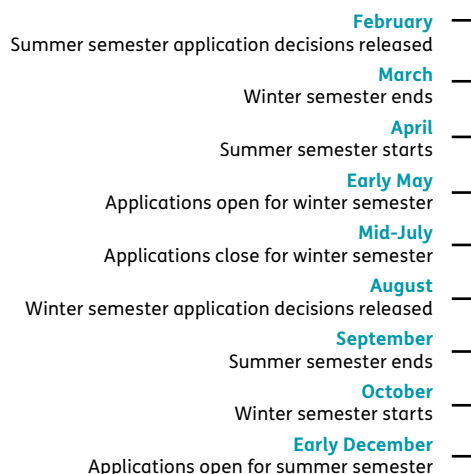
“Germany is a beautiful country with a rich history and easy access to other major European cities. The biggest challenge has been the language barrier, especially when dealing with bureaucratic matters, but trust yourself to find your own path in a completely new country.”

—Riley Newman-Gatton,
Washington, Jacobs University

Private universities in Germany offer undergraduate and graduate programs. These institutions typically offer more of a US-style campus experience.

Academic Calendar

At German universities the academic year is divided into two terms: the winter semester (October to March) and summer semester (April to September).



Sometimes students sit for exams during breaks between semesters. They also use breaks to travel, work, or do internships.

Search

Several websites are designed to help international students find best-fit opportunities, including the DAAD-sponsored Study in Germany website. There, students can plan their studies by searching and viewing programs according to the language in which the course is offered. Just use the My Guide tool, a DAAD search engine.

Apply

Upon identifying their desired program of study, US students should check to see if the university offering it is a member of Uni-Assist. [Uni-Assist](#) is an application service that evaluates international documents and credentials for roughly 180 member universities. If the university

is part of the Uni-Assist network, international students must apply using the Uni-Assist application service. If the university is not a member of Uni-Assist, international students can apply directly to the institution. Applications from international students whose credentials are determined by Uni-Assist to meet the standards for admission to German university study programs are forwarded to the individual university. The university itself makes the final admission decision.

In most cases, students can apply to as many programs as they would like. For high-demand subjects, including medicine, veterinary science, pharmacy, and dentistry, the number of spaces available is restricted. These programs are designated *numerus clausus*, referencing the “closed number” of spaces. Students interested in these areas of study are advised to directly contact their universities of choice for details.

Deadlines

Applications for the winter semester can be submitted from late May through mid-July, though some universities have deadlines as early as the end of May. Applicants who will not receive their high school diploma until after the application deadline are advised to contact the specific university and program for guidance. Decision notifications generally begin in August. Summer semester submission season runs from early December to mid-January, with notification beginning in February.

Application Fees

Uni-Assist charges 75 euros for the first application and 30 euros for each additional application submitted for the same semester. Other fees for translation services, notarized copies, and exams (see “Admission Requirements”) may also apply.

Admission Requirements

Many German universities require the equivalent of a German state-accredited Abitur qualification, a document issued to German secondary school students who have passed their final exams. International students can either qualify for direct admission to a course of study or general admission to a preparatory program, depending on their preparation in high school. To find out if you meet the criteria, use this [Uni-Assist tool](#). Early academic planning will help ensure admission requirements are able to be met. Applicants should go to [Uni-Assist](#) for the most up-to-date information on requirements and consult with the [International Office](#) at the chosen higher education institution.



Direct entry is typically possible with a US high school diploma—as long as the student has completed prerequisite courses—and one of the following: two years at a college, an associate degree, or four Advanced Placement (AP) exams for direct subject-restricted admission. An IB diploma that fulfills [Germany's IB requirements](#) also qualifies students for direct admission.

Applicants who do not fulfill direct admission requirements but have a US high school diploma may qualify for general admission to a preparatory program undertaken at a Studienkolleg, which offers foundational courses to prepare international students for university. In some cases, students may sit for the university qualification exam, known as [Feststellungsprüfung](#). An IB diploma that does not include six mandated examination subjects would also qualify students for a preparatory program. See the [Studienkolleg website](#) for more information.

For *numerus clausus* courses, admission is based on a calculated average grade, which takes into account applicants' high school grades. Because admission is competitive, successful applicants usually have strong grades. GEDs issued by individual states are not accepted by German universities. Moreover, students who were home-schooled for the entirety or part of their studies in grades 9-12 would not be considered eligible for admission to German universities.

With some exceptions, students who plan to enroll in programs taught in German must submit scores from either the German Language University Entrance Examination for Foreign Applicants (DSH) or the Test of German as a Foreign Language (TestDaF). Completion of certain Studienkolleg preparatory courses may also satisfy German language requirements. More information on language requirements can be found through [Study in Germany](#).



Students applying to English-taught programs generally do not have to demonstrate German proficiency.

Letters of recommendation are usually not necessary, though some programs may require them.

Upon Acceptance

Universities typically accept or deny students; conditional offers are uncommon. If accepted, the university will advise students on what paperwork they need to complete.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition, even for international students, is generally free at all German public universities, though students are required to pay fees each semester for public transportation, meals in the dining halls, use of athletic facilities, and cultural programming. The fees average about 250 euros per semester, but vary by university. Universities in the state of Baden-Württemberg, however, charge 1,500 euros for students from outside the European Union, with some exceptions for exchange students and researchers.

Private German universities charge tuition, some up to 20,000 euros per year. Some schools offer flexible financing options, such as allowing students to defer fee payment until after graduation when they have secured employment.

The [DAAD website](#) includes a database of merit-based scholarship opportunities for international students.

Housing

Students typically live in either a student residence hall or private accommodation. The [DAAD website](#) offers an online search tool based on a student's destination; see "Plan Your Stay." This search feature allows students to view options, locations and prices, the related application process, and deadlines for securing a spot.

Campus life at German institutions is typical of European universities. Many students live off campus in shared or single apartments. Dormitories with cafeterias and meal programs are not usually available at the larger public universities. Most offer only shared kitchen spaces.

Visa and Other Permits

Although US citizens are eligible to enter Germany without a visa, students are still required to apply for a residency/long-term student visa within 90 days after their arrival in Germany.

To apply for this permit, students must first find accommodations and obtain a confirmation of registration (*Meldebestätigung*) document from the local Residents' Registration Office. Students will also need the following when applying for a residence permit: passport, letter of university acceptance, evidence they can cover the expected cost of their education and living expenses (approximately 861 euros per month or 10,332 euros per year), and proof of health insurance. Additional documents may also be required.

The residence permit is valid for two years and must be renewed before it expires. An extension of the residence permit will usually be granted provided



"Choosing a residential international university made all the difference for me. Living among students from all over the world has been the most enlightening part of my undergraduate experience."

—Riley Newman-Gatton,
Washington, Jacobs

Photo courtesy of Riley Newman-Gatton

the student shows proof from their university that their studies are proceeding properly. For more information on German visa regulations, visit the [German Federal Foreign Office website](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/germany).

Fees for residence permits vary according to location but cost up to 75 euros. Additional guidance about specific locations can be obtained through the [German Consulates General](https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/germany). Non-European Union (EU) students can work 120 full days or 240 half-days per year—or more if a work permit is obtained—excluding research assistant work.

Germany has recently eased its post-study work eligibility requirements for students. After graduation, international students can extend their residence permits by 18 months in order to find a job, beginning from the date their final exam results are issued. If they obtain a job in Germany, after two years of work they can apply for permanent residency status.

Advice from the Field

General queries can be directed to The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) via email at daad.newyork@daad.de. DAAD also provides numerous resources about studying in Germany:

- [A Pocket Guide for International Students](#)
- [A Practical Guide for International Students](#)

Academic standards across German universities are high and generally consistent among institutions.

While some undergraduate programs in Germany may be taught in English, the majority are not. Many graduate programs, however, are offered in English.

To take full advantage of their experience, students are encouraged to learn some German either before or during their studies.



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