German universities
A success story with a long tradition

Germany is one of the most popular places to study in the world. Its universities enjoy an excellent international reputation and are valued cooperative partners with foreign universities worldwide.

→ Modern and innovative

German universities provide important stimulus for innovation and progress. More than 80 Nobel laureates have come from Germany, 70 of whom have received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, Physics and Medicine – six alone in the last ten years.

→ Century-old tradition

German universities are proud of their long, successful tradition. The first university was founded in Heidelberg in 1386. German universities have continually expanded and flourished ever since. One of the most influential German scholars was the reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), whose principle of uniting research and instruction remains the focus of German universities today.

→ International orientation

According to the recent “Global Gauge” study published by the British Council, the internationalisation efforts at Germany’s universities are the best in the world. The aim is to have at least 50 % of students complete a period of studying abroad at some time during their degree programmes.

→ Reliable partners

German universities are strongly committed to expanding university-level cooperation worldwide, bilateral university agreements, international student exchange programmes, joint degree programmes and equal partnerships.
The university system

Diversity at the highest quality

The German university system is extremely diverse with over 2 million students enrolled at about 390 universities in 175 cities throughout Germany.

There are three different types of universities:
- Universities for scientifically oriented study
- Universities of applied sciences for practically oriented study
- Colleges of art, film and music for artistic study

Public or private

Most universities in Germany receive state and federal public funding. In addition to numerous private universities, there are also 40 universities which receive funding from the German Catholic and Protestant churches.

Tuition fees

Most students attend a public university. Although tuition fees vary from state to state, most undergraduate and many master’s degree programmes cost nothing or relatively little (up to 500 euros per semester). In certain cases, especially for non-consecutive master’s degree programmes, students may be charged significantly higher fees of 10,000 euros or more per semester (= 1/2 year). Private universities tend to charge relatively high tuition fees, as well.

Quality and ranking

All universities in Germany offer a high quality of instruction. Independent accreditation agencies regularly monitor the quality of the universities and the degree programmes they offer.
- [www.akkreditierungsrat.de](http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de)

With so little difference in quality between universities, rankings play hardly any role in Germany. The CHE University Ranking is the most comprehensive ranking instrument in Germany.
- [www.university-ranking.de](http://www.university-ranking.de)

Excellence Initiative

In 2005, the German states and federal government launched a programme, titled the Excellence Initiative, to promote science and research at German universities.
- [www.dfg.de/exzellenzinitiative](http://www.dfg.de/exzellenzinitiative)

A total of 4.6 billion euros has been allocated to fund the programme until the end of 2017. The Excellence Initiative awards funding for:
- Graduate schools to promote talented, young researchers
- Clusters of Excellence to promote cutting-edge research
- Institutional strategies for project-based expansion of top university research

The following universities will receive funding for their outstanding institutional strategies until the end of 2017:
- RWTH Aachen University
- Freie Universität Berlin
- Humboldt University Berlin
- University of Bremen
- University of Cologne
- University of Konstanz
- Ludwig Maximilians University Munich
- Technische Universität München
- University of Tübingen

Study opportunities

Something for everyone

Germany is currently implementing the Bologna Process together with some 50 other countries with the purpose of creating the European Higher Education Area. Initiated in 1999, the largest university reform process in decades aims to standardise graduation certificates throughout Europe and ease student mobility. Part of this reform calls for two- or three-semester bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes, which German universities have been introducing on a wide scale.

German universities offer degree programmes suited to all students at all levels of study.

There are more than 16,000 degree programmes, including:

- ca. 9,000 undergraduate programmes
- ca. 7,000 graduate programmes

A complete database of all degree programmes in Germany is available at [www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de).

Internationally recognised degrees

German universities award a variety of certificates of professional qualification.

- Bachelor's degree (BA, BSc, …)
  - 1st academic degree
  - 6 to 8 semester undergraduate study programme

- Master's degree (MA, MSc, …)
  - 2nd academic degree (following successful completion of a bachelor’s)
  - 2 to 4 semester advanced study programme

State examination

- State certificate awarded to medical doctors, pharmacists, jurists and teachers

Diploma

- German academic degree, equivalent to a master’s degree, awarded to graduates in the Natural Sciences, Engineering, Economics and Social Sciences
- Most Diploma programmes have been replaced by equivalent bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes
- Some engineering programmes offer students a choice between a Diplom-Ingenieur (Dipl.-Ing) certificate and a master’s degree

Doctorate

- German academic degree following an awarded master’s degree, state examination or Diploma from a university or a university of applied sciences
- Conferral of a doctoral title
- 4 to 10 semester study and research programme and completion of a doctoral thesis

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Two paths to a doctorate

German universities offer postgraduates two attractive doctoral study opportunities. They are:

1. Individual doctoral study
   - Doctoral candidates may choose to work independently on a doctoral thesis (dissertation). They must first convince a professor (= doctoral supervisor) of the suitability of his/her qualifications and research proposal.

2. Structured PhD programmes
   - Candidates can enrol in a PhD programme, e.g.:
     - Research training groups = university research programmes of limited duration.
     - Dissertations are usually part of an interdisciplinary project carried out by several researchers.
     - Graduate schools and international doctoral programmes = especially tailored to the needs of international doctoral candidates, mostly English language programmes at universities or research institutes

Universities and students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of universities and</th>
<th>number of students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>152</td>
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<tr>
<td>Universities of</td>
<td>2,063,744</td>
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<tr>
<td>applied sciences</td>
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<td>Colleges of art, film</td>
<td>744,712</td>
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<td>and music</td>
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<td>universities</td>
<td>120,843</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Source: [www.hochschulkompass.de](http://www.hochschulkompass.de)
University admission and eligibility

Visit www.anabin.de for an overview of foreign secondary school leaving certificates recognised as a higher education entrance qualification in Germany. Universities are also permitted to individualise requirements for admission. Especially for master’s degree programmes, each university can decide whether applicants must fulfill specific requirements or pass additional tests. Therefore, when applicants apply for admission to a particular university or particular degree programme, they should always ask about any special rules that might relate to them.

Language proficiency

The required level of language proficiency at German universities largely depends on the degree programme in question:

- **International degree programmes:**
  - good English language skills
  - good German language skills

Students can certify their German language ability by taking one of several standardised tests, e.g. TestDaF, the Test of a German Language.

**Entry visas**

Foreigners may require an entry visa depending on their country of origin and the purpose of their visit.

- Citizens of EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland do not require an entry visa.
- Citizens of other countries should contact the German embassy or consulate in their home country or visit www.diplo.de/visa for information on specific entry requirements.

**Financing**

All international students must provide proof that they can finance their studies in Germany (proof of financial resources). At present, international students must show that they have about 8,000 euros at their disposal for one year of study.

**Employment after graduation**

Many foreign students decide to stay and work in Germany after graduating from a German university. Some 7,400 foreign graduates were able to gain employment here in 2011. Work regulations for foreigners have significantly improved in recent years. Foreign graduates may stay in Germany for 18 months after completing their studies so that they can find a job which matches their qualifications. Those who succeed are allowed to remain in Germany – and have good chances at obtaining a permanent residence permit.

The prospects of finding a job are especially good wherever there is a lack of highly qualified workers in Germany. At present, candidates with expertise in mathematics, computer science, natural sciences or technology are in high demand.

**Services for international students**

Sound advice and financial aid

The well-equipped German universities offer students optimal conditions for gaining a successful education. The academic staff take students seriously as scholars and researchers, and provide them with excellent advice.

**Student Advice Service**

Every university has an International Office which is responsible for assisting international students in all matters. This is where students can obtain information on study opportunities and admission requirements, or receive help with preparing for university study, finding accommodation and taking care of formalities.

**Code of Conduct**

A large number of German universities have adopted the National Code of Conduct for Foreign Students. Its goal is to continue to improve the academic advice for international students, in particular, by formalising:

- How international students are to be informed and counselled
- How their admission process is to be conducted
- What kind of academic, language and social advice they can expect

The Code of Conduct assures certain minimum standards, which international applicants can rely on.

**Scholarships**

A broad range of funding opportunities is available to international students who wish to study in Germany. Most scholarships are awarded by funding organisations and foundations. Some universities have scholarship programmes of their own, but compared to other countries, the number and size of these scholarships are limited. German funding organisations rarely offer full scholarships and generally do not award grants to beginning undergraduates.

**The DAAD**

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is a joint organisation of German institutions of higher education and student bodies. Its task is to promote academic cooperation around the world, especially by supporting the exchange of students and academics.

In 2011, the DAAD had a total budget of more than 400 million euros, 70 million of which went to fund internationalisation programmes at German universities, and another 80 million to support academic cooperation with developing nations.

**University policy**

**Freedoms and flexibility**

Decentralised educational policy

Germany is a federal republic and each of its 16 states has a parliament of its own. Educational policy is made at the state level – which means that each state determines its own university laws and regulations.

Higher Education Framework Act

Although each state has the liberty to draw up its own science and university policies, a nationwide law – the Higher Education Framework Act (HRG) – stipulates certain guidelines that all states have to follow.

Conference of Education Ministers

This group of state ministers of education, science and cultural affairs regularly meets to decide on important educational policy matters on a national scale.

**German Rectors’ Conference**

Most German universities are members of the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK). The HRK conveys the interests of the universities to policy makers and the public.

**Creative freedom**

Universities enjoy a large degree of freedom to shape their profile. Consequently, regulations are not always the same at every university. This is why many questions can only be answered by directly contacting the university in question.

**Addresses**

**DAAD Branch Offices and Information Centres (IC)**

- **Argentina**
  - IC Buenos Aires www.daad.org.ar
  - Armenia IC Erevan www.daad.am
  - **Australia**
  - IC Canberra http://ic.daad.de/canberra
  - IC Canberra Pune E-mail: pune@daad.org.au
  - **Indonesia**
  - IC Jakarta Branch Office www.daaadtj.org
  - IC Jakarta Tel E-mail: Jakarta@daad.de

- **Bahamas**
  - E-mail: daad-bahamas@gmx.de

- **Ireland**
  - IC Dublin www.daad-ireland.org
  - **Italy**
  - IC Florence www.italy.daad.de

- **Kenya**
  - IC Nairobi Branch Office www.daad.or.ke
  - **Latvia**
  - IC Riga

- **Liberia**
  - E-mail: daad-liberia@gmx.de

- **Moldova**
  - IC Chisinau

- **Nigeria**
  - IC Lagos

- **North Macedonia**
  - IC Skopje

- **Poland**
  - IC Warsaw

- **Portugal**
  - IC Lisbon

- **Romania**
  - IC Bucharest

- **Turkey**
  - IC Ankara

- **Ukraine**
  - IC Kharkiv

- **Vietnam**
  - IC Ho Chi Minh City

**Important links**

- **www.study-in.de**

- **www.daad.de**
  - International Bachelors, Master and Doctoral Programmes, language and short courses, preparatory courses

- **www.daad.de/international-programmes**

- **Scholarship database**

Visit the DAAD scholarship database for an overview of the funding opportunities available to international students.

- **www.funding-guides.de**

For a detailed listing of all addresses, visit www.daad.de/offices.