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## STUDY ABROAD

# PHD Study in Germany



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**STUDY & SETTLE IN GERMANY | 100% PLACEMENT | EXCELLENT CAREER**

# PhD Study in Germany

Germany's historic (and highly-ranked) universities make it an excellent choice for study abroad at any level. But when it comes to doctoral research, the country has even more to offer. German universities have offered the PhD since the 19th century, and continue to offer innovative, high-quality postgraduate programmes. Best of all, most universities do not charge tuition fees to students of any nationality!

This page covers everything you need to know about PhD study in Germany. It includes an overview of the German higher education system, an explanation of the types of [German PhD](#) and advice for your application.

## PhD opportunities in Germany – what's on offer for 2022?

With striking landscapes, medieval and modern heritage sites and seasonal events ranging from Oktoberfest to Christmas Markets, it's no surprise Germany is the seventh-most-visited country in the world.

The German higher education system is also world-class and has produced some of history's most formidable thinkers, including theoretical physicist Albert Einstein.

Here are a few of reasons why you should consider studying for your PhD in Germany this year:

- **Globally ranked institutions** – Germany is home to more globally-ranked institutions than any other country outside the USA and UK. Seven of them feature in the [current top 100](#)
- **Dedicated research institutes** – In addition to its universities, Germany is also home to networks of dedicated research centres. These include its prestigious Max Planck Institutes, as well as specific collaborations between universities and research institutes such as the [Max Planck Schools](#)
- **Affordability** – Most German universities charge no tuition fees for PhD students, regardless of nationality
- **The home of the PhD** – The PhD (in its modern form as a thesis-based research degree) was actually developed in Germany. Perhaps this 'original contribution to knowledge' can help inspire yours?

## PhD Study in Germany – Key Details

<b>Universities</b>	520
<b>Nobel prizes</b>	108
<b>Oldest University</b>	<a href="#">University of Heidelberg</a> (1386)
<b>International Students</b>	311,738
<b>PhD Length</b>	3-4 years
<b>Typical Fees</b>	None
<b>Academic Year</b>	October to September

## German universities

Germany is home to over 500 higher education institutions. Not all of them award PhDs, but those that do are renowned for generating highly trained researchers.

### Types of German university

The German higher education system is made up of the following:

- **Research Universities** (*Universität*) carry out original academic research in various subjects.
- **Technical Universities** (*Technische Universität*) specialise in Science, Technology and Engineering research. However, they have recently begun to offer qualifications in some other subjects.
- **Universities of Applied Science** (*Fachhochschulen*) focus on professional and vocational subjects such as Engineering, Business or Social Science. They do not award PhDs.
- **Research Institutes** carry out important research projects (including PhD work) in partnership with universities, businesses and industry. Most operate within larger networks such as the [Max Planck Society](#).
- **Colleges of Art, Film and Music** focus on practical and performance-related work and don't award PhDs.

As a PhD student you will be applying to the research/technical universities or research institutes.

### Public and private universities

Germany is divided into 16 states (*lander*). Each state administers its own **public universities** and provides them with funding. A small number of public universities also receive funding from the Protestant or Catholic church.

There are **400** public universities in Germany. As a PhD student, you'll probably be studying at one of them (along with 95% of other students within the country).

The other 5% of the student body attend the **120 private universities**. These do not receive state funding. Many are Universities of Applied Sciences, which do not offer PhD programmes.

## German university rankings

### Top 30 German Universities in 2022

University	THE 2022	QS 2022	ARWU 2021
LMU Munich	32	64	48
Technical University of Munich	38	=50	52
Heidelberg University	=42	63	57
<a href="#">Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin</a>	73	-	-
Humbolt University of Berlin	74	=128	-
<a href="#">University of Tübingen</a>	=78	=177	151-200
Free University of Berlin	83	127	-
University of Freiburg	=108	172	101-150
<a href="#">RWTH Aachen University</a>	=108	165	201-300
University of Bonn	112	=226	84
University of Göttingen	=119	204	101-150
University of Hamburg	=132	214	201-300
Technical University of Berlin	139	159	201-300
<a href="#">University of Mannheim</a>	=146	423	-
Ulm University	=146	=365	301-400
University of Würzburg	165	=378	201-300

## German university rankings

### Top 30 German Universities in 2022

<a href="#">University of Cologne</a>	=172	=311	151-200
<a href="#">TU Dresden</a>	=194	=173	201-300
<a href="#">Karlsruhe Institute of Technology</a>	180	136	201-300
University of Erlangen-Nuremburg	=197	=322	201-300
University of Hohenheim	=197	601-650	901-1000
<a href="#">Friedrich Schiller University Jena</a>	251-250	-	-
University of Konstanz	201-250	501-510	501-600
University of Münster	201-250	411	151-200
University of Duisburg-Essen	251-300	801-1000	301-400
<a href="#">Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf</a>	251-300	-	301-400
<a href="#">University of Kiel</a>	251-300	-	201-300
University of Potsdam	251-300	701-750	401-500
<a href="#">Ruhr University Bochum</a>	251-300	=393	401-500

Note that independent research centres and schools are not usually included within rankings. This isn't any reflection on the quality of their PhDs. It's for the simple reason that they aren't technically 'universities' and don't teach undergraduates.

### **Max Planck Schools**

The varied nature of Germany's higher education system means that the best researchers in a specific field are often spread across different institutions. The [Max Planck Schools](#) brings together this distributed expertise to address specific research objectives.

They bring together international PhD students with Germany's best scientists. Research takes place in three interdisciplinary fields: [Cognition](#), [Matter to Life](#) and [Photonics](#).

The [Max Planck Schools](#) offer fully financed PhD positions. Candidates benefit from unique expertise, infrastructure and training opportunities.

### **German university cities**

The capital city of Germany – Berlin, is popular amongst both tourists and international students. However, if you fancy living away from the hustle and bustle of a capital city, don't worry! Germany has a number of other thriving, student-friendly cities and towns:

- [Study in Berlin](#)
- [Study in Munich](#)
- [Study in Hamburg](#)
- [Study in Frankfurt](#)
- [Study in Cologne](#)
- [Study in Heidelberg](#)
- [Study in Freiburg](#)

### **PhD Structure**

Germany is a member of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This means its qualifications follow the format of the **Bologna process**. A doctorate in Germany is a **third-cycle** qualification.

## Types of PhD in Germany

The doctoral degree – based upon independent research towards an extended thesis – was a German innovation. This format is still offered at most universities, but some also offer more ‘structured’ programmes:

- **The traditional PhD** – you will pursue a research project independently with the guidance of an expert [supervisor](#) ( *Doktorvater / Doktomutter* ). The candidate chooses the institution where they would like to conduct their research. This could be at a university or non-university organisation, or within a German company.
- **Structured doctoral programmes** – these are conducted largely in English and are internationally-oriented. You will complete additional training alongside your thesis. This might include collaborations and placements with external research institutes.

### The German PhD process

The PhD process in Germany depends upon the type of doctorate you are working towards.

In general, both will involve conducting a research project and writing a [thesis](#). However, there are some key differences:

- **Traditional PhDs** offer a more independent and flexible PhD. There is no compulsory attendance or set curriculum. You will focus on completing your research and writing a thesis.
- **Structured doctoral programmes** include compulsory lectures, seminars and interim assessments. You will attend transferable skills training in academic/scientific methods and soft skills. You will work on wider research projects with the students and team of academics within the programme.

The majority of doctoral candidates complete the traditional doctorate. However, a growing number are choosing structured programmes – especially in the natural sciences and mathematics.

### Supervision

The number of supervisors you have will also depend upon the PhD programme you have chosen.

If you are planning to apply for a **traditional doctorate** you will [choose one supervisor](#) to conduct your research project under. Although there to guide you, your supervisor will have little input into the content of your project. You will be expected to largely **work independently** towards your own thesis.

For **structured doctoral students** there will typically be a **team of supervisors** who look after all the PhD students within a doctoral programme. This helps to promote interdisciplinary collaborations. These projects involve more support and training from supervisors and other members of your programme.

place in front of at least two professors in related fields.

In some cases, the oral examinations are replaced with a defence of your thesis (*Disputation*). The thesis defence focuses more on the research you have conducted and why you did it. By contrast, the oral examinations test your wider knowledge in the field.

If you choose a **structured programme** you will need to complete several compulsory units to attain the **180–240 ECTS credits** that are required for PhD students. You will be assessed on your knowledge of course content delivered in **lectures** and **seminars**. This is similar to an undergraduate degree (but quite a bit more advanced). You will still have to submit a thesis, and complete the **oral examinations**.

## Fees and funding

Doctoral degrees in Germany are normally **free** for all students, **regardless of nationality**. However, you may have to pay some other fees during your studies.

### PhD fees

At doctoral level, tuition is free across **all public universities** in Germany for up to three years (six semesters) of study. You may be required to pay tuition fees for any extension period beyond the standard length for your PhD.

Though you won't pay fees, you will need to make a semester contribution (*Semesterbeitrag*, which is usually between **€100–350**). This covers administration costs, student governance and student services (*Studentenwerk*).

### Living costs

As you will not be paying tuition fees, your main expenses within Germany will be your living costs. These can be higher than other European countries.

International students will need about **€867** per month to cover accommodation, food and other living expenses.

## Funding

Though you won't normally pay any fees, you'll probably still need some form of [PhD funding in Germany](#) to help cover your living costs. There are lots of options available, including:

- graduate assistantships and fellowships from your university
- public funding for international students provided by the German government
- funding from business, industry and independent research hubs such as [Max Planck Schools](#)



## Applying for a PhD in Germany

The application procedure in Germany is slightly different to other countries.

If you apply for a **traditional PhD**, you must identify and contact a supervisor to request they supervise your thesis.

Applications for **structured PhDs** are made directly to your chosen institution or graduate school.

### Entry requirements

To study for a PhD in Germany you will generally need to have **completed a minimum of eight semesters of academic study**. The final qualification you obtained must be equivalent to a German Masters degree.

Your previous degree/s must also be recognised by the Dean's Office (*Dekanat*) or Board of Examiners (*Promotionsausschuss*) at your university.

Exceptionally well-qualified international students may be admitted onto a PhD with a Bachelor degree (**fast-track programme**). For this you will typically have to complete an **entrance examination**.

### Language requirements

The language requirements for a PhD in Germany will depend on the programme you apply for.

**Structured doctoral programmes** are typically taught in English. If this isn't your first language you may have to complete an [English language proficiency test](#), such as the TOEFL or IELTS. Individual institutions will set their required scores for these tests.

**Traditional PhDs** may require you to write your thesis in German (though some institutions allow other languages). Therefore, you may need to [prove your German language proficiency](#). Your knowledge of German will need to be certified through a TestDaF or DSH.

### Application process

To apply for a PhD in Germany, you'll usually need to submit the following:

- A **statement from your doctoral supervisor** – if you are applying to complete a traditional PhD project you must submit a statement from your chosen supervisor confirming that they intend to supervise your thesis
- **Academic documents** – you will need to provide certified copies of certificates and academic transcripts from previous degrees
- **Proof of recognition** – you must obtain recognition of your qualifications from the Dean's Office or University Board of Examiners
- **Academic references** – your [referees](#) should include at least two professors who have worked with you

Once you have supplied these materials, your eligibility as a PhD candidate can be confirmed.

## Interviews

Some **structured PhD programmes** interview applicants. This will typically be in front of the supervising board for that programme. Interviews for traditional programmes are usually conducted with your chosen supervisor (and may be more informal).

Interviews for international students are typically conducted over skype.

Germany is a popular destination for international study in Europe. Its immigration system reflects this. Students from a wide range of countries are able to enter Germany freely without a visa.

### Who needs a visa to study in Germany?

Students from the following countries are able to study in Germany **without a visa**:

- The **EU, EEA** and **Switzerland**
- **Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea** and the **USA**
- **China, Hong Kong** and **Macao** (you must hold a Special Administrative Region passport)
- **Taiwan** (your passport must have an identity card number)
- **Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia** and **Ukraine** (you must hold a biometric passport)
- **Andorra, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Monaco** and **San Marino** (you must not intend to seek separate employment before or after your degree)

If you are an international student from another country, you need a visa in to study in Germany.

### Visa types

There are two types of visa for PhD students in Germany:

- A **Student Applicant Visa** (*Visum zur Studienbewerbung*) allows you to enter Germany for 3-months to complete your admissions. You use this to apply for your full Student Visa
- A **Student Visa** (*Visum zu Studienzwecken*) allows you to enter Germany for up to 3-months once accepted for PhD study. You can then apply for a residence permit

Regardless of your visa requirements, you will also need to register your presence in Germany once you arrive:

### What you'll need for a visa

There are several requirements and documents you must take with you when you apply for your visa or residence permit:

#### Academic documents

- **letter of admission** to a recognised German university
- your full **academic transcripts**

#### Personal documents

## What you'll need for a visa

There are several requirements and documents you must take with you when you apply for your visa or residence permit:

### Academic documents

- **letter of admission** to a recognised German university
- your full **academic transcripts**

### Personal documents

- your **passport** (valid for the duration of your PhD),
- two **passport photos**
- a **tenancy agreement** proving you have secured accommodation for your stay

### Other documents

- proof of **health insurance** valid for your entire stay
- **language qualifications** for the language your thesis will be in
- **evidence of financial resources** (€10,332 per year)
- your *Meldebestätigung* (if applying for a residence permit)

A residence permit will **up to €110** and your visa **approximately €75**.

### Health insurance

By law every resident in Germany must have valid health insurance, you will not be allowed to enrol at university or apply for a student visa without it.

Germany has social insurance agreements with the European Union member states. This means that if you're an EU national your **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)** will cover you within Germany.

For students from other countries there are many insurers within Germany that will provide medical insurance for international students. Your university's international office may also be able to provide advice.

## Next steps

Germany is a popular destination for international workers, but it is important to begin career-planning during your doctorate. For example, most employers in Germany will prefer you to be able to speak German.

### Can I work in Germany after my PhD?

The regulations for working in Germany after a PhD depend upon your nationality.

Students from **EU and EEA countries** will not need a work permit. You will have the same access to the employment market as German nationals.

Students from **outside the EU and EEA** can apply for a Job Seeker's visa, which is valid for six months while you seek employment.

### EU Blue Card

Once you have accepted a job you must apply for a German residence permit or an [EU Blue Card](#). The EU Blue Card is preferable if you intend to work in another EU state, however you must have secured a job that pays at least **€56,800 per year** (this amount is slightly lower for workers in fields that suffer from labour shortages, at €44,304 per year).

## Advantages to Candidates

- 1) Work Contract & Employment in German Health Facilities.
- 2) Local Support to Candidates till settlement.
- 3) Eligibility for PR in Germany after 5 Years.
- 4) Eligible for Spouse VISA and Spouse can also work.
- 5) Eligible for Free Education for Self & family.



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**www.edurizon.in**  
**lalitkamtiedurizon@gmail.com**

307/ 309, 3rd Floor, Best Arcade Above Canara Bank Pocket 6  
market, near K.M. Chowk, Sector 12 Dwarka New Delhi - 110075

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