



SSAG Guide to **STUDYING IN GERMANY**





Foreword

Dear Singaporean Students,

Interested in pursuing your studies in Germany but not sure where to begin? The Singapore Students' Association of Germany (SSAG) has you covered. From understanding just what this diverse and historical country has to offer to navigating the murky waters of German bureaucracy, rest assured that you will not be embarking on this new, exciting path alone.

This comprehensive guide has been curated with your interests in mind. Securing a place for yourself in a foreign country can be intimidating, and we hope to prepare you as well as possible for that next big leap.

In the pages that follow, you will find information on a wide range of topics, including:

- The Tertiary Education Landscape: What are your options for higher education?
- The German Grading System: How it works and compares to UK/US standards
- Applying to a German University: Requirements for admission
- Financing Your Education: Understanding the expenses and finding work
- Student Life: The university experience and life outside of classes
- Exchange Semester: Available programmes
- Before and After Your Arrival: A Brief Checklist

Remember, while adapting to a new culture and environment can be a journey of self-discovery, it's perfectly okay to seek assistance along the way. SSAG is a community that's here to support you. From organised events to networking opportunities, we're dedicated to enhancing your experience and helping you make the most of your time in Germany.

Once again, welcome to SSAG. We look forward to seeing you here someday!

Warmest regards,

Singapore Students' Association in Germany (SSAG)



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The Tertiary Education Landscape



The Tertiary Education Landscape

Germany has hundreds of state-recognized and private institutions, with a wide variety of study programmes. Interested in a particular degree? Check if universities offer it with [My GUIDE](#).

1. Institutions of Higher Education

The following types of higher education institutions exist in Germany: comprehensive universities (*Universitäten/Hochschulen*), universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), universities of art, film and music (*Kunst-, Film- und Musikhochschulen*), and *Duale Hochschulen*.

Universities (*Universitäten*) mainly specialise in methodic and theoretical education. Courses have a strong academic emphasis and can be incredibly diverse. Some universities specialise in particular subject areas, such as universities of technology (*Technische Universitäten*) or universities of education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*). University graduates can generally move on to graduate and post-graduate studies easily.

Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) are much more practice-oriented, with courses being tailored to meet professional requirements. Subjects offered include technology, business, social services or media. Some courses include mandatory work placements with both local and international corporations. These internships or projects can last from one semester to several semesters depending on the particular study programme.

Universities of Arts cover creative subjects, such as music, architecture, fine arts, etc. These types of study programmes usually require an entrance examination or audition, and are mostly taught in German.

Duale Hochschule programmes allow you to learn in a work environment and are offered primarily by universities of applied sciences and vocational academies (*Berufsakademien*). You may have to sign a contract with a company as well. Education and training normally takes place at the company and at the institution. In most cases, the company will pay you for your work and cover your study fees.

2. Academic Calendar

The academic year in Germany is split into two semesters:

Winter Semester Lecture Period: October to mid-February

Summer Semester Lecture Period: April to mid-July

Technically, the two semesters run continuously after one another; however, classes are only offered during the lecture period (*Vorlesungszeit*), and exams can be held either around the end of the lecture period, or after the lecture-free period



(*Vorlesungsfreizeit*), also known as the semester break. Depending on your course, there may also be a mandatory work attachment (*Praktikum*) with a set amount of hours to fulfil in order to graduate.

3. Academic Structure

Aside from the internationally-recognised Bachelor's and Master's degrees, some German higher education institutions also offer traditional German degrees such as the *Diplom* and *Magister Artium*, roughly equivalent to a master's degree. However, most of these degrees are being phased out as educational reforms are passed.

An undergraduate programme typically takes 3 years to complete, while a graduate programme might take 1 - 2 years. All students will be expected to write a thesis (*Bachelorarbeit/Masterarbeit*) as part of the graduation requirements, as well as attain a certain number of ECTS credits.

The European Credits Transfer System (ECTS) facilitates the transfer of credits between universities all across Europe. Students are expected to complete 180 ECTS credits for a bachelor's degree (ca. 30 credits per semester) and anywhere between 120-150 ECTS credits for a master's degree.

Certain study programmes will require state examinations (*Staatsexamen*), such as law, medicine, and teaching (*Lehramt*).

To qualify for a PhD, you generally will need to have obtained either a master's degree, a *Magister*, a *Diplom* or *Staatsexamen*. Under certain circumstances, you can also be admitted to study for a doctorate with a bachelor's degree or a diploma from a university of applied sciences.

4. Studying Medicine

Completing a medical degree takes around 6 years (12 semesters), inclusive of both foundational and clinical years. The first 2 years are pre-clinical (*Vorklinik*) and prepare one for the first part (*Physikum*) of the three-part medical examination (*Staatsexamen / Ärztliche Prüfung*). Students are expected to have completed at least 90 days of a nursing internship before they take the *Physikum*.

The next 3 years are clinical (*Klinik*), focusing more on medical subjects. Students must complete a 4-month internship (*Famulatur*) at various medical facilities before they take the second part of the medical exam.

The final year is a practical year (*Praktisches Jahr*), spent working in a clinic or hospital. At the end of that period, students will finally sit for the final part of the medical examination, an oral and practical exam. Upon successful completion of the exams, students receive their approbation and are now recognised as doctors.

As of 2022, the Singapore Medical Council only recognises degrees from the universities on [this list](#).



German Grading System



The German Grading System

For those used to the Singaporean system of grading, the German grading system can be a challenge to understand and adjust to.

1. German Grades (*Die Noten*)

German universities use a 5-point grading scale, with 1,0 being the best possible grade and 5,0 being the lowest. A 4,0 is generally regarded as the minimum grade for passing, although some universities might accept a 4,3 as well. Within each band, a 0,3 or 0,7 might be used to further differentiate scores (eg. 2,3 would be a better grade than 2,7).

Many universities use "*Mit Auszeichnung bestanden*" (Passed with Distinction) if the grade is a perfect score of 1,0. However, grade requirements might vary between universities. Make sure to refer to the examination regulations (*Studienordnung*) for specific degree programmes to understand their grading system.

Grade	ECTS Grade	Percentage	Definition
1,0 – 1,5	A	91 – 100%	Sehr Gut (Very good)
1,6 – 2,5	B	81 – 90%	Gut (Good)
2,6 – 3,5	C	66 – 80%	Befriedigend (Satisfactory)
3,6 – 4,0	D	50 – 65%	Ausreichend (Sufficient)
5,0	E	0 – 49%	Mangelhaft / Nicht Bestanden (Insufficient / Failed)

While ECTS grades aren't mandatory, they can be added in the Diploma Supplement, a certificate which provides detailed information about the programme and the university in which the degree was awarded. This can be helpful when transferring or applying to other EU universities.

2. ECTS

Students are allocated a specific number of points, called ECTS points or *Kreditpunkte*, based on the workload required to complete a module. These include attending lectures and seminars, preparing classwork, or doing projects and presentations.



Do note that ECTS points are not grades (which measure performance), but are awarded *in addition* to grades.

One ECTS point corresponds to a workload of 30 hours. A Bachelor's degree requires 180 ECTS points, while a Master's requires at least 120.

3. UK/US/SG Equivalents

A rough comparison of the grades has been compiled here for your reference.

German Grade	US Grade	UK Grade (Estimate)	NUS/NTU Grade
1,0 – 1,5	A	1st Class Honours	4.50 and above
1,6 – 2,5	A	2nd Class Honours, Upper Division	4.00 – 4.49
2,6 – 3,5	B	2nd Class Honours, Lower Division	3.50 – 3.99
3,6 – 4,0	C	3rd Class Honours	3.00 – 3.49 (Pass) 2.00 – 2.99
5,0	F	Fail	Fail

The information was sourced from [World Education Services \(WES\)](#) and the [University of Aberystwyth's EU Qualifications Comparability Calculator](#), and the comparisons are for the overall averaged-out grades for German degrees (*Durchschnittsnote* or *Gesamtnote*) and the NTU/NUS Honours classification system. Do note that the overall grade and degree classification conversions are rough guides and are not meant to serve as an absolute reference for cut-off scores – these are subject to further individual considerations on a case-by-case basis, as well as possible future changes to the conversion agreements.

Due to education being under the purview of the individual Federal States (*Bundesland*) rather than the Federal Government (*Bundesregierung*), Germany generally does not have an Honours system nor a degree classification system. With the exception of certain courses such as law or postgraduate courses, degree classifications are very rarely given out at German universities. Some universities might award special distinctions (e.g. “Mit Auszeichnung” or “cum laude”) to students whom they consider exceedingly exceptional (ie. a final grade of 1,1 and better), but this is extremely rare for those completing a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

Having said that, the UK Department for Education recognises the German Bachelor degree as being equivalent to British Honours degrees, meaning that **a German BA or BSc is equivalent to a British BA (Hons) and BSc (Hons)**.

Nonetheless, the conversion of the overall grade or classification of a German degree for graduate or postgraduate admissions is often done on an individual, case-by-case basis as many Anglophone universities are cognisant of the highly subjective German



grading system, which may be particularly harsh on students who come from more renowned traditional universities. This is largely due to the fact that the *Universitäten* and *Technische Universitäten* are notorious for being more stringent in the awarding of grades.



Applying to a German University



Applying to a German University

1. General Admission Requirements

The minimal entrance qualification for an undergraduate degree is a high school graduation certificate.

In the case of Singapore, this refers to the GCE 'A'-Level Certificate, Polytechnic Diploma, and the International Baccalaureate.

- **Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate Of Education: Advanced Level (GCE 'A'-levels) & Ordinary Level (GCE 'O'-levels)**

Also known as the **School Graduation Certificate**, this certificate can be used for application to all courses. Students will be admitted directly if the general and subject-related minimum requirements have been met:

4 'A'-Level subjects, with at least 3 H2s and 1 H1, of which the candidate should have passed:

- ❖ At least ONE Mathematics or Science subject
- ❖ A Pass in Mother Tongue/a third language
- ❖ A Pass in General Paper or Knowledge & Inquiry

If applying for a course taught in German, the following requirements must also be met:

- ❖ Applicants must show their language proficiency skills with a German language proficiency certificate (DSH, the TestDaF, or the Goethe Certificate C2)

For certain courses, there are also subject-specific requirements.

- ❖ Medicine, Pharmacy, Technology, Natural Sciences
 - At least 2 Mathematics/Science subjects in Advanced Level
- ❖ Economics, Business
 - Either Economics or Management of Business in Advanced Level

The 'A'-Level certificate has to be sent in along with 'O'-level certificates – sending in the 'A'-Level certificate alone will result in the application being rejected, as 'O'-level Higher Mother Tongue or 'O'-level + H1 Mother Tongue is required for proof of passing the second language component.

For students from the Integrated Programmes, Secondary 4 Promotional Examination results may be included alongside 'O'-level Higher Mother Tongue or 'O'-level + H1 Mother Tongue certificates.



● International Baccalaureate (IB)

The IB Certificate is recognised for direct entrance into German universities if the candidate has been in school for a minimum of 12 years. Candidates who fail to meet this requirement are required to attend the Studienkolleg before entering university.

Of the six subjects, the following subjects must be offered:

- ❖ **Two** languages at Level A or B (with competency in one language at either “Language A” or “Language B Higher Level”)
- ❖ **One** Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
- ❖ Mathematics (Mathematical Methods or Mathematics Higher Level or Further Mathematics in conjunction with Mathematics Higher Level)
- ❖ **One** Humanities (History, Geography, Economics, Psychology, Philosophy, Social Anthropology, Business and Management, Global Politics)
- ❖ The last subject can be any of the aforementioned subjects or one of the following subjects: Art/Design, Music, Theatre Arts, Film, Literature and Performance, another modern foreign language, Latin, Classical Greek, General Chemistry, Applied Chemistry, Environmental Systems, Computer Science, Design Technology, World Religions, Sports Exercise and Health Science, Digital Society.

Either Mathematics or at least **one** science subject should be offered at Higher Level.

Candidates should have achieved at least a grade of ‘4’ for each subject offered. A grade of ‘3’ can be balanced out by scoring a ‘5’ in at least 1 subject of similar difficulty **and** if a minimum score of 24 has been achieved.

IB grade can be converted into the German grade system using the following equation:

$$Y = 1 + 3 \left(\frac{42 - X}{18} \right)$$

where X = IB Grade and Y = German Grade.

A score of 42 to 45 will be immediately graded with a 1,0.

(Adapted from the KMK website. The original German document can be found [here](#).)



• Polytechnic Diploma

The Polytechnic Diploma is generally not accepted as a German university entrance qualification. Normally, direct admission to German universities is not possible.

However, diploma holders may get admission for certain degree courses offered at *Fachhochschulen*. Applicants with a Polytechnic Diploma (Merit) will also be allowed to apply for direct entry to German universities, provided that they have an acceptance from either the National University of Singapore or Nanyang Technological University. Acceptance into a degree course is also contingent on passing the German language tests as well (at least level B1/B2).

Applicants must have 5 independent general GCE 'O'-Level Passes, with at least 2 languages and one Mathematics/Science subject.

Diploma holders who do not meet the above-mentioned requirements but wish to apply for entry to a *Universität* will usually have to spend a year at a *Studienkolleg* (Preparatory College) before they will be admitted directly into the university. Applicants will usually apply to the universities first, and the university will decide if a Studienkolleg is needed – and if so, you will be accepted to the university immediately upon successful completion of the Studienkolleg course. The preparatory course generally lasts 2 semesters and is conducted in German.

Students are required to pass an entrance examination to first qualify for the Studienkolleg, and then pass the university entrance assessment examination (*Feststellungsprüfung*) at the end of the course before they can start their undergraduate studies.

Application to technical universities will be decided on a case by case basis.

For those looking for a grade conversion formula, the 'modified Bavarian formula' can be used to get a rough equivalent.

$$\frac{\text{highest possible grade} - \text{actual grade}}{\text{highest possible grade} - \text{lowest possible grade}} \times 3 + 1$$

The *Technische Universität München* (TUM) also has a [grade conversion tool](#) on their website along with more information.

For more information, do check out the [DAAD's database](#) and contact the international offices of the respective institutions.

• Graduate Studies and Doctorates

For graduate studies, i.e. a Master's Degree or a PhD, the recognition of your previous degree is one of the decisive factors. Degrees obtained from NUS, SMU and NTU are recognised for direct entrance for graduate studies in Germany. Do contact the International Office of the desired university if you have any queries on course or language requirements, and also to apply.



There are three cases in which you do not have to personally apply to an institution:

- ❖ If you have been awarded a DAAD scholarship, the DAAD will handle your application.
- ❖ If you graduated in Germany or from a recognized German higher education institution abroad, or if you come from a country that is a member of the European Union, you can apply like any German national to the [Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung](#) (University Admissions Foundation). Here you will find detailed information on what programs are available, how to apply for your desired program, and what the selection criteria are. This website is available in German only.
- ❖ If the university of your choice uses the admission service [uni-assist](#), you will have to apply through them. This service will assist foreign students with their application procedure, will check their applications, and will inform them whether their application form is complete. The advantage is that through uni-assist you can apply to several universities with only one set of documents. There is a charge of EUR 75.00 for the first application and EUR 30.00 for each further application.

(Source: [Justlanded.com](#))

For more information on doing a PhD and research in Germany, please refer to the [DAAD website](#).

2. Language Requirements

Language requirements are part of the university admission criteria. If your degree programme is entirely in German, then you will be required to provide proof of German language proficiency. The following German language tests and certificates are recognized by most German universities:

- ❖ **TestDaF** (TDN 3, 4 or 5) ([Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache](#))
 - It can be taken at various language schools (including abroad), and is a standardised exam with a certificate that is recognised not just by universities, but as a proof of German proficiency in general.
 - The exam consists of four parts – listening, comprehension, writing, and oral – which are conducted sequentially. The oral component involves written prompts and recording your responses to be submitted, with no live discussion.
 - Each section of the test is graded independently, with TDN 3 being the lowest passing score. Scoring at least TDN 4 for every component satisfies the language requirement for all universities throughout Germany. Should



you score TDN 3 in any component, you may still apply, depending on the course and university. Otherwise, you may retake the test as many times as you'd like.

❖ **DSH II or III** ([*Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang*](#))

- The DSH varies from university to university, and while the structure is generally the same, some end up being a little harder than others. It's best to contact the university for practice tests to get a sense of the level of difficulty of the DSH test from that particular institution. Some of them also offer preparatory courses a month before the exam.
- There are two main components of any DSH test: written and oral. The written part assesses your listening, comprehension, and writing skills, while the oral exam focuses on your ability to express your opinions to an examiner.
- Scores go from DSH1 to DSH3, with DSH3 being the highest score. You must achieve a score of at least DSH2 (67%) on each section in order to pass. The written component is taken first and must be passed before you can take the oral portion. For more information, please check with the universities you are intending to apply to.

❖ **Goethe-Zertifikat** [**C2**](#)

- This exam can be taken at any Goethe-Institut branch worldwide. It comprises reading, listening, writing and speaking modules. The Goethe-Institut publishes sample questions and mock exams on their website, as well as additional resources for practising German.

❖ **telc Deutsch C1 Hochschule** ([*The European Language Certificate*](#))

- The telc C1 exam consists of four components: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The writing component requires you to produce a structured text, while the speaking part involves a conversation with an examiner.
- The exam is graded on a scale of 0-100. The overall score is calculated based on individual scores in each section. To pass the exam, candidates must achieve a minimum score of 60% in total.

❖ **DSD II** (Deutsches Sprachdiplom Stufe II)

- This test is only offered to pupils enrolled at accredited secondary schools worldwide which offer the DSD. A DSD II is equivalent to B2/C1.

The TestDaF and Goethe-Zertifikat can be taken in Singapore.



If your course is taught in English, you may still be asked to provide IELTS or TOEFL scores, so do check with the international office of your target university as early as possible.

3. Application Checklist

The following is a checklist of documents required by most higher education institutions for a successful application, but this list is by no means exhaustive. Always check with the admissions offices, as they differ between institutions.

Take note that all certified true copies of certificates should be certified by an official notary or the Embassy. Some universities may accept certified copies from the issuing institutions (ie. your school), but this is not guaranteed.

Most German universities do not require documents and certificates to be translated into German if they are already in English. However, do check with the university on their stance regarding non-German language documents.

Completed Application Form	Certain universities use application portals like uni-assist or Hochschulstart, where your application details can be centralised and sent to multiple universities. Other universities will require you to apply directly to them, either online or by post. Check with the universities on how they process international applications.
School/Polytechnic Graduation Certificate	The SGC must be submitted with the 'A'-Level certificate – please remember to submit <i>all</i> pages of your SGC, along with any 'O'-Level certificates. The polytechnic graduation certificate should contain your grades and the full transcript of records.
'O'-Level/'A'-Level Mother Tongue Certificate	You must prove that you have passed the Mother Tongue component by submitting the certificate.
Transcript of Records	If you're currently enrolled in another university, the transcript is required.
German Language Proficiency Certificate	
Curriculum Vitae (CV)	Please sign at the bottom of your CV.



CCA Records/Achievements	
Testimonials	If required.
Letter of Motivation	Certain universities require letters of motivation, usually for graduate and post-graduate studies. Check with your university on whether you will need to submit one.
Orientation Test Certificates	Certain states like Baden-Württemberg require all applicants to take orientation tests before they can be admitted. Students may need to take an online test to determine their aptitude and interest in the subject and submit the proof of participation or certificate received upon completion. Please check with the respective faculties and universities for more information.
GRE/GMAT/SAT scores	If required.

The application deadline for non-EU applicants for most universities is usually **July 15** for the Winter Semester and **January 15** for the Summer Semester. Documents which arrive at the universities after these dates will be rejected, which means you should send your documents well in advance.

Upon submission of your application documents, it would be best to apply for a study applicants' visa as well, in order to avoid any delays with your enrolment.

There is no holding of places for Singaporeans who need to serve NS before entering university. You are only allowed to apply for the semester in which you intend to begin with your studies.



Financing Your Education



Financing Your Education

Germany is famous for its affordable education, but the cost of living is still above the EU average, so expect to shell out more for rent and food, especially in bigger cities.

1. Cost of Living

Living expenses range from €750-€1000 per month and include rent, mandatory health insurance, and other living costs (food, phone bills, transport, etc). Rental costs differ from city to city, with cities like Cologne, Munich, or Frankfurt having higher than average rents, but students generally pay between 290 and 560 euros for accommodation.

If you intend to travel around and eat out a lot, do prepare to spend more. For more information on costs, check out the following [website](#).

2. Tuition Fees

School fees can be divided into semester fees and tuition fees.

All students at a higher education institution are required to pay the semester contribution. The amount varies depending on the higher education institution and can range from €100 to €350. This covers the administrative costs, costs for student support services (*Studentenwerk*), and in the case of some universities, also for a *Semesterticket* that grants you free travel within the city or even within the region. The tickets can range from between €25 to €200 depending on the area and range. At some higher education institutions, however, you have to pay for the *Semesterticket* on top of the semester fee.

As a rule, state higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees for Bachelor's or many Master's degree courses. However, as of 2018, the state of Baden-Württemberg introduced tuition fees of €1500 per semester (Bachelor's, Master's, Diplom, Staatsexamen) for non-EU citizens. Other states have also begun to charge tuition fees, although they are still considerably lower compared to countries like the UK, US, or even Singapore. It is still entirely possible to complete your undergraduate studies at a state university in Germany at the same cost as studying for a year in the US or UK.

Private universities, however, charge far more for tuition fees and vary between institutions.

3. Scholarships

There are a multitude of scholarships, offered by both Singapore and Germany, for students to further their education in Germany. The DAAD offers scholarship programmes for German and foreign undergraduates, postgraduate students, as well as researchers.

You can also apply for scholarships from political or business-linked foundations or religious organisations.



Please note that it is rarely possible to get funding from the DAAD and most other institutions for your entire programme of study (from your first to your last semester).

- ❖ [Databank on Scholarships from Singapore](#)
- ❖ [Databank on Scholarships from Germany](#)

4. Working Part-Time

The residence permit allows international students to work for up to 120 days (or 240 half days) a year. You may not work more than 20 hours a week, unless you receive permission from the immigration office.

Companies are always searching for holiday workers during semester breaks, so look for *Ferienbeschäftigung* or *Ferienarbeit*. Alternatively, if you want to work while you study, minijobs are a great way to make some money without sacrificing too much time. As the name suggests, they are minimum-wage jobs that you rarely have to pay taxes or social security contributions on. Some degree of fluency in German is almost always required.

Apart from internships at firms, students can also consider working as Werkstudenten, where they are contracted to companies as part-time employees to gain work experience and paid accordingly. These are usually not considered as part of the curriculum and may not be recognised as internships.

Lastly, university departments have positions open for student assistants (HiWis), who support professors or other academic staff in their work. The 120-day rule does not apply to students who work as student assistants. There are no restrictions for these jobs at the university, but you must still inform the immigration office if you want to work more than 20 hours a week.

If you are interested in a job like this, check with the secretary's office in your department, and on bulletin boards in hallways. Otherwise, job portals like [stellenwerk.de](#) and [Young Capital](#) can help you find out if anyone is hiring in your area.



Student Life



Student Life

Life in Germany is full of opportunities and exciting experiences, although adjusting to this new and vibrant culture might take some time at first.

1. Academic Life

German universities are strong proponents of independence and initiative, and students are expected to seek out information on their own and take charge of their learning by asking questions, both within and outside the classroom. You will be required to plan your study out as well as settle administrative matters punctually. Of course, universities will still be ready to offer guidance regarding regulations and contacts, and student or international offices are always available in case of any issues. By and large, however, students will be largely responsible for their own time here.

With this autonomy comes a great degree of flexibility, as you will get the chance to organise your own timetable and even when to sit for your examinations. One thing to note is that students are *not* automatically registered for the end-of-semester exams, so make sure to stay on top of your registrations.

2. Extracurriculars

There's more to student life than studying, and regardless of where you are, you will find a wide range of activities to take part in. Sports, interest groups, and student initiatives are great ways to try out new things and meet people.

Aside from meeting up for a drink or game nights, you can also leave the city for nature hikes or to visit neighbouring towns. There are an array of historical and natural wonders to be found across the country, and entertainment venues and museums often offer discounts for students as well. An [International Student Identity Card \(ISIC\)](#) can also help you access discounts on accommodations and transport worldwide.

Germany's location in the heart of Europe also means that you can get around the continent fairly easily. Plus, with cross-country railways and budget flights, travelling around doesn't always have to break the bank.



Exchange Semester



Exchange Semester

Perhaps a full-time course in a foreign country may not be quite your cup of tea, but there are still many opportunities for you to come to Germany via an exchange semester or two.

1. Exchange Programmes

Local universities in Singapore have extensive partnerships with many different German universities, which you can check out below:

- [National University of Singapore](#)
- [Nanyang Technological University](#)
- [Singapore Management University](#)

2. Free-mover Programmes

Don't like the choices offered by your universities, or not offered the university you wanted?

Don't worry – there's always the opportunity to apply to German universities as a free-mover. In this programme, you do not pay school fees at your home university for the period of the programme, but at your guest university instead. The selection criteria varies from university to university – some only accept students with German knowledge, while others accept only students from visa-free countries (Singapore is unfortunately not one of them for this purpose).

Nevertheless, it won't hurt to try and contact the respective international offices of the universities you are interested in.



Before Your Arrival



Before Your Arrival

1. Visa Matters

If you are intending to stay for more than 3 months in Germany, you will have to apply for a visa; a student visa is absolutely necessary for matriculation at most German universities.

There are **4** types of student visas:

- ❖ Full-time student visa, applicable to students who have been accepted into an German institution of higher education
- ❖ Student applicant visa, for students who are intending to study in Germany, but have not received admission into an institution of higher education
 - This can later be converted into a full student visa in Germany by presenting an acceptance letter (*Zulassungsbescheid*)
- ❖ Language or preparatory course visa, for students who have been accepted into an institution of higher education, but must attend a language course or a *Studienkolleg* before they can begin at the university
- ❖ Internship visa, for students who are pursuing an internship at a German firm or university

It is *strongly recommended* that all prospective degree-seeking students apply for a student applicant visa after submitting your applications. This can be obtained even without a letter of acceptance from a German university. As the visa application can take as long as 8-10 weeks, there might be insufficient time for you to apply for a visa upon receiving your acceptance letter, and your letter of acceptance may even be revoked if you do not arrive by your university's enrolment deadline.

As such, do apply for the student applicant visa as early as May or June to avoid unnecessary complications during your enrolment at the university.

Exchange students should have received their letters of acceptance significantly earlier and should not be affected. Nevertheless, it is best that all students apply for their visas at least 3-4 months before their term begins.

Do note that you will need your visa **before** you enter the country. You **cannot** convert a tourist visa into a student visa after entering Germany.

An appointment must be made online to submit your visa application. Make sure you have the required documents and visa fees ready in order to avoid being turned away. For more information, please consult the [German Embassy in Singapore](#).

Additionally, do make sure your passport remains valid for the entire duration of your stay, and renew/extend it with the Immigration and Checkpoint Authority before you leave.



2. Pre-Departure List

Here's a list of items you may want to pack before you fly off, because some of them may not be as available or affordable in Germany.

- ☐ Biometric passport photos (You will need a few for official applications.)
- ☐ Letter of acceptance
- ☐ Transcript of records
- ☐ Winter jacket and thermal underwear (Bring one winter jacket. More can be bought after your arrival, especially during post-Christmas sales.)
- ☐ Rice cooker
- ☐ Instant noodles
- ☐ Milo
- ☐ Stationery
- ☐ Scientific calculator (if required)
- ☐ Power adaptor
- ☐ Personal medication

Here are some things that cost more in Germany, so it's recommended to have them before you fly off.

- ☐ Extra pair of spectacles
- ☐ Haircut
- ☐ Chopsticks and soup spoons
- ☐ Local snacks ("Asian" items tend to cost more.)

Additionally, make sure you have:

- ❖ The correct visa
- ❖ [Registered](#) with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ❖ Applied for your [Exit Permit](#) to defer any NS liabilities
- ❖ An international/German credit card (Wise/Revolut/Youtrip are highly recommended)
- ❖ Secured accommodation
- ❖ A contact person at your destination



After Your Arrival



After Your Arrival

Once you arrive in your city, these are the most important things you will need to do. The process is relatively straightforward, as long as you pay careful attention to the documents you need to bring along and the requirements stated.

For more information, do check out our Guide to Living in Germany as well!

1. Enrollment

Firstly, you'll need to enroll yourself at the university.

Please bring along your passport, acceptance letter (*Zulassungsbescheid*) and proof of German health insurance coverage to the International Office of your university.

Depending on your course, you may also need to supplement additional documents, such as language certificates or proof of payment of your semester fees (*Semesterbeitrag*), as well as tuition fees for full-time students and free-movers, where applicable.

You will then be issued a proof of matriculation (*Immatrikulationsbescheinigung*) from the university.

2. Registering with Local Authorities

Next, you'll need to register your address (*Anmeldung*) with the Residents' Registration Office (*Bürgerbüro*) and the Foreigners' Registration Office (*Ausländerbehörde*).

At the *Bürgerbüro*, you will need to register your address to prove that you are currently living in the city. You will need your passport and rental contract or proof of confirmation from your landlord (*Wohnungsgeberbestätigung*).

Should you be staying in temporary accommodation, you must update the *Bürgerbüro* once you have moved to a new permanent location. The *Bürgerbüro* must always be kept updated in the event of any changes of address. They will also issue you with an *Anmeldungsbescheinigung* or *Anmeldungsschein* upon successful registration – keep this document safe as you will need it for other administrative matters.

After registering your address, you will need to convert your visa at the *Ausländerbehörde*.

Do note that your visa will not be extended if you do not have an officially registered address in Germany – hence, the *Anmeldungsbescheinigung*. While the student visa has allowed you to enter Germany for study purposes, to stay in the country beyond the time period on your visa, you will have to convert it to a residence permit.

Students are given a “limited residence permit” known as an *Aufenthaltserlaubnis* or *Aufenthaltsbewilligung*. It is different from a full residence permit (such as an *Aufenthaltsgenehmigung*) in that it does not allow you full recourse to public funds and allows only a limited number of days of employment per year. Residence permits



(collectively known as *Aufenthaltstiteln*) are issued in the form of cards, and you are advised to carry them along with your passport when travelling out of or back into Germany.

You will also be mailed an *Elektronischer Aufenthaltstitel* along with a *Zusatzblatt* (Supplement). Do **not** throw this supplement away, as it contains essential information.

This is a mandatory process for all residents in Germany and is essential for various administrative matters. Residence registration must be done within 14 days after move-in dates.

Check the website of the responsible registry office in the city for the details of how to register, as well as the list of documents you will need to bring along with you. In general, most of the documents you will need are as follows:

- Receipt of your registration with the authorities (*Anmeldungsbescheinigung*)
- Valid passport and student visa
- Proof of financial resources or sponsorship
- Proof of insurance coverage (simply showing the health insurance card is insufficient!)
- Proof of purpose of residence (*Deutschkursbescheinigung*, proof of attendance of language course) or *Immatrikulationsbescheinigung* (proof of matriculation at a university)
- Completed residence permit application form
- Biometric-compatible passport-sized photographs

3. Finance

In order to apply for various services in Germany, a German bank account is recommended.

There are a variety of banks to choose from, and many of them offer student accounts that do not charge monthly fees. Certain banks are entirely online, like N26, while other banks, such as Deutsche Bank or Commerzbank, have branches and ATMs across the country. Choose a bank based on your needs and preferences.

International online accounts like Revolut and Wise are also decent alternatives, with lower fees and good English user support. If you choose to use them, it would be best to apply for a card while you're in Singapore, as delivery times in Germany will take longer.

4. Insurance

State-recognised health insurance is **mandatory** for all students in Germany – you will **not** be enrolled without proof of your health insurance. Travel insurance and insurance bought in Singapore do not count as they are not legally recognised in Germany.

Students can choose between statutory and private health insurance providers. Highly popular statutory providers are TK, AOK, and DAK, which offer roughly the same premiums for students. Each provider offers different benefits, and there are many



websites that compare them for you, so be sure to do your research before making your decision. Private providers offer certain benefits such as being able to visit private clinics and obtain services faster. However, they tend to charge more compared to statutory providers.

To apply for insurance, you will need your passport (together with your student visa) and a valid German bank account. After signing a contract, you will need a written confirmation from your insurance provider stating that you are covered by them; this document is necessary for matriculation as well as with applying for your *Aufenthaltserlaubnis*.