



# Studying in Germany A Good Choice for Your Child

## 15 Questions and Answers for Parents



**DAAD**

Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

“Learning for the future is tradition here – that’s why I’m studying Economics in Germany.”

Junhong Meng from China is pursuing her doctorate in Economics at Heidelberg University.



Photo taken in the auditorium of Heidelberg University, the oldest university in Germany.

[www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de)

Study in  
Germany



Land of Ideas

**Studying in Germany**  
**A Good Choice for Your Child**  
15 Questions and Answers  
for Parents

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German Academic Exchange Service



## Who are we?

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

You can find more information about studying and living in Germany in our info brochures, at [www.daad.de](http://www.daad.de) and on our DAAD branch office and information centre websites.



## Dear Parents,

We are happy that you and your child are considering Germany as a place to study abroad. Studying in a foreign country is a big challenge. As a father myself, I am very aware of the concerns parents have about their children's well-being and professional future. You're probably a little nervous about how your child will fare in a foreign country. And you may have many questions that still need answering. This brochure should help you find those answers.

Germany is a great place to study and has much to offer your child. German universities have an excellent reputation around the world – a reputation that has endured for hundreds of years. This might explain why Germany is the third most popular destination for international students, right behind the United States and Great Britain. There are almost 250,000 young people from around the world currently studying and researching in Germany. German universities offer students a wide variety of study opportunities. The degrees, which your child may pursue here, are internationally recognised and will strongly improve his or her chances of a promising career.

Furthermore, Germany is not only a top economic power in the world, but also a democratic, tolerant, safe and beautiful country with an abundance of cultural, touristic and culinary attractions.

We would be delighted to have your child come to Germany to study. It is certainly a good choice.

Yours sincerely,

**Prof. Dr. Max Huber**

Vice President of the DAAD and  
former rector of the University of Bonn



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# 1

## What are the benefits of studying abroad?

Living in a foreign country provides young people a chance to see and experience life outside of their backyard. It introduces them to new perspectives and ideas which they would have otherwise never encountered. Foreign experience shapes and enriches one's personal development.

Even if a foreign culture doesn't appear so foreign at first glance, living abroad certainly expands one's horizons. And it also helps one overcome prejudice and intolerance. Young people make many new friends during their study visit abroad – and these international friendships continue to play an important role throughout their lives.

Studying abroad will provide your child with much more than a good dose of self-confidence. It will also strongly benefit his/her professional career. International experience qualifies young people for professions in a globalised world. A period of study in a foreign country looks very good on one's curriculum vitae and will prove beneficial when your child applies for jobs after university. By studying in a foreign-speaking country, your child will be able to quickly improve his/her language proficiency while making international contacts at an early stage.

Nowadays studying abroad does not necessarily prolong one's time at university. Most universities around the world recognise the academic credit which their students receive in Germany. In addition, many universities have developed special degree programmes tailored to the needs of international students in recent years.

In short, a study visit abroad is a worthwhile investment in your child's future.





## *Studying abroad in ...*

*Germany? In my opinion, experience abroad is a big plus on a person's CV. I myself worked in The Hague as Managing Director for Technology, IT and Procurement at T-Mobile Netherlands from 2002 to 2007.*

*After that I held a similar position at Polska Telefonii Cyfrowa in Warsaw for two years. Be it Germany, Holland or Poland, it is always obvious that companies are looking for young managers who – besides a top-notch education – have a clear sense of those fine distinctions between corporate cultures. Job applicants have an obvious advantage if they've completed a semester abroad, a postgraduate degree programme or an internship in a foreign country. I would always recommend that young people gain experience abroad during their studies. It really pays off!*

**Bruno Jacobfeuerborn** is Managing Director of Technology at T-Mobile Deutschland and member of the Board of Management T-Mobile, Technology.



### *My university education ...*

*in Germany was a turning point in my life. It opened the door to my entire professional career. When I came to Germany at 17, I would have never guessed I'd end up in research one day. At Heidelberg University I was impressed by my professors' enthusiasm. It was important to them to actually discuss things with their students. They introduced me to critical thinking and ultimately motivated me to specialise in science. During my studies and research activities, I've had the chance to work with colleagues from around the world. I've become much more open-minded and tolerant toward other religions and countries – also because people here in Germany have accepted me so openly and without prejudice.*

**Dr. Nabeel Farhan** comes from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. He studied at Heidelberg University and received his doctorate at the German Cancer Research Center. He currently works at the Department of Neurosurgery at the University Medical Center Freiburg.

## 2

### What are the advantages of studying in Germany?

German universities have an excellent reputation throughout the world. They produce significant and internationally applicable advances in research and innovation.

Many pioneering inventions were created in Germany. The list of German Nobel Prize winners is long – sixty-eight alone in the field of science and medicine. These include Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, Robert Koch, Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard and Harald zur Hausen. And Germany isn't called the "land of poets and thinkers" for nothing. It has produced great philosophers like Kant, Hegel and Adorno, poets like Goethe, Heine and Brecht, and renowned composers, such as Bach, Beethoven and Brahms.

Science and research have a long tradition in Germany and still play an important role today. The oldest university was founded in Heidelberg in 1386. There are over 360 nationally accredited universities located in more than 170 cities and towns in Germany (see map on p. 31). These universities offer a wide range of opportunities to study and research with more than 13,000 degree programmes, 800 of which are internationally oriented.

Your child will find optimal conditions for gaining a successful education in Germany. The facilities at universities and research institutes are well-equipped. Students receive intensive academic advising, but are also taken seriously as future scholars and scientists.

And, of course, German is one of the most important scientific languages and is shared by over 125 million people worldwide. Although English is a must, German is a plus. Most people regard English as essential, but knowing another foreign language can improve one's career chances in a globalised world. That's why learning German is a good idea!



# 3

## How much German will my child have to know?

To feel at home in a foreign country, it usually helps to have a good grasp of the native language. And the same goes for Germany.

Naturally, it would be ideal if your child could already speak some German before entering university in Germany. To save time and money, your child could start learning German at home, for example, at a Goethe Institute. That being said, nobody at a German university expects international students to speak perfect German when they arrive here.

The level of language proficiency required for studying at a German university depends entirely on the degree programme your child chooses.

- Those who choose an international degree programme require English first and foremost. German universities currently offer more than 800 bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programmes in English. For more information about international degree programmes, visit [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes).
- Those who wish to enter a German-language degree programme must prove they have attained a certain level of German language proficiency. There are several types of examinations and standardised tests which universities accept as proof of language proficiency, e.g. the TestDaF.

There are many opportunities to learn German in Germany. In addition to language instruction offered in combination with degree programmes, many universities organise language courses in the summer so that foreign students can improve their German proficiency before their studies commence. There are many other German courses available outside the university, for example, at Goethe Institutes based in Germany, adult education centres and numerous private language schools.

## 4

### Are there university preparatory courses in Germany?

Perhaps you are concerned that your child won't be able to meet the demands of a university-level degree programme in a foreign country. German universities, however, offer special courses that are designed to prepare prospective students for study in Germany.

For example, foundation or propaedeutic courses are academic preparatory programmes which many universities offer international applicants. These courses help students gain the language and academic skills necessary for study in Germany. They often include an introduction to the German university system and scientific working methods.

Participating in a summer course is another way of becoming familiar with academic requirements in Germany. Universities throughout the country offer such courses to prospective students during the summer months. For more information about summer courses, see question 6 and visit [www.summerschools.de](http://www.summerschools.de).



## *The preparatory course ...*

*at our university provides an overall view of the most important aspects of studying in Germany. The course teaches students working methods, presentation techniques, organisational and time management skills, as well as intercultural competence. We also strongly focus on improving language proficiency and introducing students to German scientific culture. After the course, our international students are optimally prepared for their degree programmes. From day one, they know exactly where they should go and what is expected of them. This initial orientation helps them save valuable time at the start of their degree programme. The course is also a good opportunity to get to know people – after completing the foundation course, nobody faces life at the university alone.*

**Nadine Stahlberg** organises the university preparatory course “Propädeutikum International und Integrativ” at the University of Göttingen.





## 5 Where and what should my child study?

Universities in Germany offer degree programmes for all interests and levels of education. International students may:

- Enter an undergraduate degree programme as a first-semester student.
- Gain foreign experience through a university exchange programme.
- Pursue a master's or doctoral degree.

With over 360 nationally-accredited universities and 13,000 degree programmes in Germany, it may be difficult to decide on where and what to study. The list becomes more manageable once a student chooses one of three types of institutions to attend:

- Universities (scientifically-oriented study)
- Universities of applied sciences (practice-oriented study)
- Colleges of art, film and music (artistic study)

Most universities in Germany are publicly financed. Only three percent of all students choose to study at one of the 90 or so private universities. Everyone else is registered at public universities, the reason being that private universities tend to charge high tuition fees. The quality of instruction at both types of universities, however, is comparably high.

To help you decide on the right degree programme, we recommend visiting [www.daad.de/deutschland](http://www.daad.de/deutschland) and [www.studienwahl.de](http://www.studienwahl.de). And, of course, the highly qualified staff at the DAAD branch offices and information centres, as well as the German embassies, would be happy to consult you further.

Along with the DAAD, you will find many German universities represented at international education fairs. If you require specific information, attending such a fair is definitely worth the effort. For dates of upcoming fairs, visit [www.study-in.de/events](http://www.study-in.de/events). Your child's university at home may also offer a special exchange programme with Germany. Such programmes take care of many organisational details for a study visit abroad.

## 6

### How long should my child stay?

You may believe – and rightly so – that the decision to study in Germany is one of those momentous, life-changing decisions. You might be uncertain whether a longer study visit is right for your child. Perhaps a long visit will conflict with the academic and life plans your child has made.

There are a number of short-term study opportunities in Germany which can enhance students' academic careers at home and make their CVs look even more impressive.

German universities offer summer courses each year usually between June and September. They offer a wide range of language courses, along with specialised courses in numerous disciplines. Summer courses allow students to get to know the country and the people, and become acquainted with life at a German university. For a list of upcoming summer courses in Germany, visit [www.summerschools.de](http://www.summerschools.de).

Your child's university might have an exchange programme for short-term study visits to Germany. Such programmes frequently allow participants to spend just one semester in Germany. Your child may wish to gain some international work experience, for example, by completing an internship. Many students supplement their degree programmes with an internship to gain professional experience and familiarise themselves with the international labour market.

It might turn out that a summer course, semester abroad or internship will lead to a longer stay. For example, within four semesters your child could receive a top-rate German master's degree that is recognised around the world. On a personal level, staying longer is more rewarding, as your child will become more familiar with Germany and have the chance to polish his/her German language skills.



## *When I meet ...*

*with children and their parents, we discuss what their goals are for the future. Together we plan a study visit abroad and work on preparing the children for this challenge. In most cases, it's not the children who are afraid of going to Germany. The parents are the ones who are mostly worried because they're having a tough time being separated from their children for so long. As a Latin American and a mother, I can easily identify with parents in Colombia. But I can also put them at ease, because I myself studied abroad. And I know that Germany is a very open-minded, exciting country and that international students are warmly welcomed at German universities.*

**Natalia Hernández** offers consulting on all matters concerning study in Germany. She works at the DAAD Information Centre in Bogotá, Colombia.

# 7

## How much does it cost to study in Germany?

Compared to other European countries, the cost of living in Germany is quite reasonable. The prices for food, accommodation, clothing, cultural events, etc. are generally equivalent to the EU average.

In addition to living expenses, the cost of studying in Germany includes a health insurance premium, semester contribution and possible tuition fees. The large majority of German universities are funded by the federal government. Some publicly financed universities waive tuition fees altogether, while others charge relatively low tuition fees of around 500 euros per semester. Private universities charge much higher tuition fees of upward to 20,000 euros per academic year. All students at university have to pay an additional fee called a semester contribution. This fee generally covers the cost of a public transport ticket, called a *Semesterticket*, which can be used on all modes of public transportation in and around the city. The semester contribution varies depending on the university, but generally costs around 200 euros per semester.

It's difficult to determine exactly how much money a student in Germany needs every month. As a rule, students can live on less money in smaller cities than in larger ones. According to recent statistics, students in Germany live on an average of 770 euros per month, the largest portion of which are accommodation costs.

Remember – every international student must show they have adequate financial resources at their disposal by submitting what is called “proof of financial support”. You will have to certify that your child has at least 7,656 euros at his/her disposal for one year. We recommend contacting the German embassy in your country to find out what forms of proof are recognised.

International students are subject to restrictive labour laws in Germany. A part-time job is good for extra spending money, but will surely not suffice to cover all of your child's living expenses.

# 8

## What kinds of scholarships are available?

There are many opportunities to secure funding for short- and long-term study visits in Germany. International students can apply for scholarships offered by a variety of organisations and institutions. We recommend contacting one of our DAAD branch offices or information centres, or your child's university at home to learn more about what kind of financial aid your child may be eligible for.

The DAAD scholarship database ([www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de)) is a convenient tool for researching various types of scholarships online. The database not only contains scholarships offered by the DAAD, but other funding organisations, as well. Please keep in mind that German funding organisations rarely offer full scholarships and generally do not award grants to first-time students.

German universities also award scholarships of their own, but compared to those in other countries, there are not very many available. However, universities are constantly expanding and updating their scholarship programmes, and so it wouldn't hurt to enquire about funding opportunities at the German university of your choice.

## 9

### **Does my child need a visa to enter the country?**

As an international student, your child may need a visa to enter the country depending on where he/she comes from and how long he/she intends to stay. Citizens of EU-member countries and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland only require a valid personal ID card to enter the country.

Citizens from other countries require a visa if they wish to stay in Germany for longer than 90 days. Citizens of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and the United States may apply for this visa after arriving in Germany. Citizens from other countries must be issued a student visa before travelling to Germany.

Special rules apply if the visit to Germany does not exceed 90 days. In such cases, citizens from the following countries need not apply for a visa: Argentina, Bermuda, Brazil, Brunei, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Macau, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Singapore, Uruguay and Venezuela.

For more information about visas and application procedures, contact the German embassy or consulate in your home country.



## *Young people who ...*

*have spent time studying in Germany find many doors open to them – around the world! One of the reasons for this is because the quality of instruction at German universities is extremely high. Secondly, living abroad helps young people learn to adapt to a foreign culture – a process that makes them more flexible and open-minded. Both of these aspects play an increasingly large role in the hiring decisions at companies everywhere.*

*That's why studying in Germany is worthwhile in every respect – and you, as parents, should definitely support this endeavour.*

**Ivonne Noboa** is the director of the professional qualification centre "Ausbildung und Beruf" at the German School in Quito, Ecuador.





# 10

## How safe is Germany?

In international ranking, Germany is a safe country. There is no reason to be excessively worried about crime. People move about freely through German country villages or large cities, day or night, without taking special safety precautions.

German police are regarded as being helpful and reliable. You can call the police free of charge from any telephone in Germany by dialling **110**.

Practically every country in the world maintains an embassy or consulate in Germany. Therefore, if problems arise, your child will be able to contact a representative from their home country.

Furthermore, if your child should have any questions about personal safety or related problems, he/she can always contact the International Office (*Akademisches Auslandsamt*) at the university.

# 11

## How good is medical treatment in Germany?

Patients in Germany receive excellent medical treatment. With its dense network of highly qualified doctors, the German health care system is regarded as one of the best in the world. Should your child need medical treatment, there is probably no better place to receive top-notch health care than in Germany.

Those who study in Germany require health insurance. Before your child travels to Germany, it is important to clarify whether he/she is insured. You might discover that the health insurance policy you have in your home country also covers the cost of medical treatment in Germany. For example, students who have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) are also covered in Germany. However, if your insurance policy does not provide such coverage, your child will have to take out a health insurance policy in Germany. Public health insurance costs about 50 euros per month.

The International Office can help you with questions concerning health insurance and recommend affordable policies. Public health insurance companies usually operate branch offices close to university campuses so that students can quickly and easily sign up for health insurance coverage.

Once your child is insured, he/she can seek treatment from any doctor in Germany and must only pay a 10-euro surcharge every quarter. In case of an emergency, there are doctors always on stand-by and accident and emergency departments provide 24/7 treatment at hospitals. And again, insured patients needn't pay anything for emergency treatment. You can call an ambulance day or night by dialling the freephone number **112**.

Keep in mind that patients in Germany can only get prescription medicines from pharmacies. The Medical Preparations Act in Germany strictly regulates the sale of medication in Germany. Some medicine, which you may be able to buy over the counter in your own country, such as antibiotics, can only be prescribed by doctors in Germany.

# 12

## Who can help my child when problems arise?

Rest assured your child will not be left alone. Every university has an International Office which is responsible for taking care of organisational matters for their international students. The staff of the International Office assist foreign students who are preparing for their stay in Germany. They provide information about specific degree programmes, admission requirements and study preparation, language tests, internships, financial aid and detailed academic planning. The International Office also offers on-site support to foreign students. After your child arrives in Germany, the International Office will provide all the necessary information he/she will need to get started.

Some universities offer “mentor programmes”. Shortly after arriving in Germany, international students are assigned a personal mentor – an experienced German student – who helps them take care of formalities, deal with problems of everyday life, answer questions about their studies, etc. The Studentenwerk is an organisation that supports students at numerous universities in Germany. At some universities, the Studentenwerk even offers a service package for international students to help make their life in Germany easier. It contains a number of services, including health insurance, accommodation and meal coupons.

Every university has a student council, departmental committees and student organisations which offer academic advice and help with matters of daily life. They also organise orientation events for new students. And finally, students can contact their instructors during office hours for help with specific problems related to their courses.

However, it’s important to know that students in Germany are expected to demonstrate a certain degree of independence. They have to take personal responsibility for their own learning methods. This means that, although there are many places that offer assistance, students must go and seek it themselves.

# 13

## Where will my child live?

Students in Germany either live in student halls of residence or private accommodation.

As opposed to other countries, students at German universities are not automatically allocated rooms on campus. Actually, there are very few campus-style universities in Germany with student halls of residence located on university grounds.

However, there are student halls of residence in every university town. Rooms in such halls are usually the least expensive accommodation available, but to secure one, students have to apply well in advance.

You might also want to consider private accommodation. There is a wide variety of such offers on the market, ranging from empty rooms to furnished flats. Flat shares, or *WGs* as they say in Germany, are very popular among students. In a flat share, several people live together, each with his/her own bedroom, and share the kitchen and the bathroom. The advantages of living in a flat share are that they are relatively inexpensive, foreign students come in contact with German students easier and have the opportunity to speak and learn more German.

The International Offices at universities throughout Germany can provide helpful advice for finding accommodation.





### *Living abroad ...*

*expands one's horizons. The experience makes young people flexible and resilient and can boost their future career. Justin learned a lot during his year in Germany. And as an exchange student, he received credit for several courses he took in Germany for his degree programme in Canada. Our son enjoyed his stay in Germany so much that he's now considering going back for graduate studies. He still keeps in contact with friends he made during his stay there. Of course, we wondered how he would get around on his own. His language skills weren't especially good at that time. But that was never an issue because many Germans speak English fluently. Once we visited Justin in Germany, my husband and I realised that we needn't have worried. The trip was a wonderful experience – even for us!*

**Ingrid Waghray** from Calgary, Canada. Her son Justin studied at the University of Stuttgart for two semesters.

# 14

## What can I do when I travel to Germany?

Perhaps you're thinking about visiting your child in Germany. That's a great idea because Germany has a lot to offer.

Germany's countryside is as diverse as it is beautiful. Moorland, heathland and chains of islands with rolling sand dunes lie to the north. Dense, mixed forests and medieval castles lie along the river valleys of central Germany – a region once praised by the poets of German Romanticism. And the Alps with their crystal-clear mountain lakes rise up majestically in the south.

Cultural life doesn't only thrive in metropolitan cities like Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. Smaller cities and towns throughout Germany have event calendars filled with cultural highlights of every kind – exhibitions, concerts, open-air festivals, performances, fairs, sport events, etc.

Don't forget the regional festivals! These celebrations take place throughout the year and offer foreign visitors a uniquely German experience, for example, Carnival in the Rhineland, the Pfalz wine festivals and the Oktoberfest in Munich.

You will discover a wide range of culinary delights here – from hearty, traditional regional meals like *Sauerbraten*, *Eisbein* and *Schweinshaxe* with freshly drafted beer to fine creations prepared by top chefs and served with exquisite wines. And, of course, you will find ethnic restaurants of every kind in Germany.

Germany has a very well-developed transportation system. Whether you travel by car, train or plane, you will find that travelling in Germany is both comfortable and convenient. And because Germany is located in the heart of Europe, it is the perfect starting point for taking trips to other European countries. Come and see for yourself.

# 15

## Where can I find more information?

There are several places in your home country where you can get help and advice when planning a study visit in Germany. The following offices and their staff will be happy to answer your questions and provide you with more detailed DAAD publications:

- The DAAD branch offices and the DAAD information centres (ICs) (for addresses, visit [www.daad.de/offices](http://www.daad.de/offices))
- DAAD-affiliated instructors and lecturers at foreign universities
- The Goethe Institute
- The German diplomatic missions – i.e. embassies and consulates

### Information on the Internet:

For general information about studying in Germany:

- ▶ [www.daad.de/deutschland](http://www.daad.de/deutschland)
- ▶ [www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de)

About degree programmes:

- ▶ [www.daad.de/international-programmes](http://www.daad.de/international-programmes)
- ▶ [www.hochschulkompass.de](http://www.hochschulkompass.de)
- ▶ [www.universityranking.de](http://www.universityranking.de)
- ▶ [www.studienwahl.de](http://www.studienwahl.de)

About visas:

- ▶ [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de)

About scholarships and funding programmes:

- ▶ [www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de)

About learning German:

- ▶ [www.learn-german.net](http://www.learn-german.net)
- ▶ [www.goethe.de](http://www.goethe.de)
- ▶ [www.fadaf.de](http://www.fadaf.de)
- ▶ [www.testdaf.de](http://www.testdaf.de)
- ▶ [www.summerschools.de](http://www.summerschools.de)

And finally, please feel free to contact us at the DAAD headquarters in Bonn if you have any further questions.

We are here to help you!





**Publisher** DAAD

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**Translation** Robert Brambeer, Krefeld

**Layout and Typesetting** LPG Loewenstern Padberg GbR, Bonn

**Photo Credits** Dörthe Hagenguth (p. 2, 4, 14, 27), Peter Himself  
/ David Ausserhofer (cover, p. 22), Eric Lichtenscheidt (p. 10),  
Karl-Heinz Raach (p. 8), Wolfram Scheible (p. 7)

**Printed by** Bonifatius GmbH Druck – Buch – Verlag, Paderborn



**Print run** February 2010 – 30,000

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This brochure was funded by the Federal Foreign Office  
and is also available in German.



Federal Foreign Office

