

Organising an International Welcome

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Provided by

ZaPF – Zusammenkunft aller Physikfachschaften im deutschsprachigen Raum

(Meeting of student representatives in the German-speaking countries)

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....	4
1.1 Instructions for the FSRs (Student Councils).....	4
2 First steps.....	4
2.1 Accommodation.....	4
2.2 TV and Radio Broadcasting Fees.....	5
2.3 Public Transport.....	5
2.4 Documents and Translation.....	5
2.5 Rathaus (city registration office/ city hall).....	5
2.6 Health Insurance.....	6
2.7 Health (Diseases and Vaccines).....	6
2.8 How to Visit Doctors.....	6
2.9 Liability Insurance.....	7
2.10 Bank Account.....	7
2.11 Visa Extention.....	7
2.12 Living and Shopping.....	7
3 University.....	8
3.1 Orientation Week (University).....	8
3.2 Enrollment, Semester Ticket and Library Card, Printing Card etc.....	8
3.3 Semester Ticket.....	8
3.4 Univeristy WIFI.....	8
3.5 Student Management Systems.....	9
3.6 University Email.....	9
3.7 Time Table and Classrooms.....	9
3.8 Lectures.....	9
3.9 Mentoring Program.....	9
3.10 Academic Adviser.....	10
3.11 Psychological Support.....	10
3.12 Offices and Other Rooms.....	10
3.13 Registration for Exams.....	10
3.14 Scholarships.....	10
3.15 Timings.....	10

3.16 Bachelor Thesis.....	11
3.17 Master Thesis.....	11
3.18 how to Find a Supervisor For the Thesis.....	11
3.19 Holidays.....	11
3.20 Mensa.....	12
3.21 Maximum Time for Courses.....	12
3.22 Student Representatives.....	12
3.23 Additional Courses.....	12
3.24 Sports/Music/Art.....	12
4 Life Besides the university.....	13
4.1 How to Learn German.....	13
4.2 Part Time Jobs.....	13
4.3 Places to Visit.....	14
4.3 Apps for Buses and Trains.....	14
4.5 Biking.....	14
4.6 Kid Support.....	15
4.7 Winter.....	15
4.8 Social Media Pages and Websites.....	15
4.9 Student Discounts.....	16
4.10 Daylight Savings.....	16
4.11 Emergency Contacts.....	16
4.12 Formal Emails.....	16
4.13 Other Useful Links.....	16

1 Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide a hand-out which contains all the information regarding the study and life in German speaking countries for newly arrived international students.

1.1 Instructions for the FSRs (Student Councils)

Some things are completely same everywhere in the country like the TV and Radio Broadcasting Fees or emergency contact numbers. But some are specific and changes from the university to the university like how to get a library card or university examination registration process. So in the following document the text in black is common for everyone and the boxed text in Orange, Bold and Italic is university specific (as shown in the example below). We request the respective FSRs (Student Councils) to add their university specific details in those boxes. For simplicity we listed all these university specific things in the “todo list” at the end of the document.

Example:

Please explain the procedure on how to enroll in your university and also how to get a semester ticket, a library card, a printing card etc. and how to pay for it.

2 First steps

2.1 Accommodation

This is the most important thing of all. You need to find a place to live and have a valid address. Without a valid address you cannot open a bank account or extend your visa, so it is crucial. There are many websites to find accommodation; below are few examples of websites to help you and a video link on how to find accommodation in Germany.

Most of the universities offer temporary and permanent accommodation to students, so please check with your university.

A website to find accommodation (Germany and Austria): <https://www.wg-gesucht.de/>

A website to find accommodation (Austria): www.willhaben.at

A video about life in Germany: Finding accommodation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzclQrld3rk>

A video about Student Hostels in Germany: Rent, Process and Experience <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5f-PDUJGHI>

Maybe the Studierendenwerk, the Österreichische Hochschüler innenschaft or something equivalent offers dorms.

Please inform them if your university helps in finding accommodation. Please also add links.

2.2 TV and Radio Broadcasting Fees

In Germany it is mandatory to pay a fee (Rundfunkbeitrag/former GEZ) for TV and Radio even if you don't have one. It is 17,50 Euro per month in 2018. It is charged per household, irrespective of how many TV's you own. If you live in a shared flat it would be wise to ask your flat mates if they already pay the fee.

In Austria the fee is called GIS. It is only charged if it is proven that you own a broadcasting device. The amount you have to pay varies.

2.3 Public Transport

In the initial days (before you can get the semester ticket) it is useful to get a 'Tageskarte' ('day ticket'). It is valid for one day in the entire city. You can also find similar tickets with a validity of a few days, a week or even a month.

Information regarding the semester ticket is in section 3.3.

2.4 Documents and Translation

Mostly, forms like visa extension, Rathaus, job applications etc. are only available in German.

*Please mention what you can provide to the students to resolve this issue.
We suggest for the FSR to collaborate with the International Students Office to translate each of those documents and give the international students the "unofficial translations".*

2.5 Rathaus (city registration office/ city hall)

The Rathaus is a city registration office. All international students need to register there as soon as possible. In Germany, as required by law, it must be done within 14 working days of your arrival to Germany. For Austria it is 3 working days. So make sure to do this first. Don't forget to bring your rental agreement for registration.

Most importantly, even if you don't have a permanent address, you should still go there and give them the details of your temporary accommodation or one of your friend's addresses, and change it later when you get a new address.

To get information about city office in your town you can call 115 (Germany).

Do you need an appointment in the Rathaus? How do you get one? Phone number? Address?

In Germany: Please check the following link to find if 115 number works at your place. If don't please delete above line.

https://www.115.de/DE/Startseite/startseite_node.html

2.6 Health Insurance

Health insurance is mandatory for everyone in Germany, so you must register with one before you can enroll at your university. As an international student you can only join a few insurance companies, and it also depends on where you study. So please check at the International Office of your university before you get health insurance. Finally, don't forget to bring your insurance card with you whenever you visit a doctor.

2.7 Health (Diseases and Vaccines)

This is the homepage of German health ministry:

<https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/en/topics.html>

You should take care of ticks, which are insects living in the forest, in parks or in the grassland. Ticks can transfer diseases like Borreliosis or tick-borne encephalitis (TBE). The following are the documents regarding these two diseases for further information.

http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/246167/Fact-sheet-Lyme-borreliosis-Eng.pdf

http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/246169/Fact-sheet-Tick-borne-encephalitis-Eng.pdf

2.8 How to Visit Doctors

The most important thing is to take your health insurance card with you when visiting your doctor. You can find a doctor via Google or ask your fellow students. You can also call your health insurance hotline number to assist you to and a English speaking doctor.

In emergency cases you have to call 112. They will send an ambulance to bring you to the hospital.

You may feel sick, but you are not so bad that you need immediate medical attention? In that case, it is best to go to your family doctor the next working day. He is your first contact

for health problems. After all, he knows you and your pre-existing diseases best and knows which treatment is best for you. You are unsure whether the next working day is still sufficient? Then call 116117. For further information check the following link:

<https://www.116117.de/html/de/>(Locations in this website are given only within Germany but the information is the same for the whole European union.)

2.9 Liability Insurance

It is possible that you may accidentally damage some third party property or assets (like damage in the kitchen, lab etc). German Private Liability insurance insures you against such mistakes and the financial liabilities that come with it.

If you are interested, please inquire more information at your bank. It is highly recommended and inexpensive.

2.10 Bank Account

After getting a valid address, you can open a bank account. International students must open a blocked account with a restriction on the maximum amount you can withdraw per month. For the 2017-18 academic year, this amount is fixed at 720 Euro per month. In addition, you have to deposit a minimum of $(720 \times 12 = 8640 \text{ Euro})$ as soon as you open the account.

2.11 Visa Extension

Your first visa is valid for 3-6 months. After your arrival you need to extend your visa. This is usually done in the city you live in. It is recommended to visit the office at least two months before your visa expiry date to schedule an appointment. Make sure to take your passport copy, visa copy, study certificate from German university, house rent contract, proof of an account with sufficient funds, health insurance, the filled application form and a photo with you.

Approximately three weeks after the interview you will receive a card called residence permit ("Aufenthaltstitel") and a letter called work permit ("Arbeitsgenehmigung") by post. The visa extension period and your new expiry date is mentioned on the card. Please carry this card with you all the time.

After finishing your degree your visa can be extended to a maximum of 18 months for you to search for employment or PhD. Once you get it, the visa can be extended further.

2.12 Living and Shopping

In general, shops are closed on Sundays and public holidays (see holidays section). There may be a weekly market ("Wochenmarkt") where you can buy produce, bread, cheese, meat etc. from local farmers.

What are the typical opening hours for supermarkets in your city? Where can they find shops like supermarkets, pharmacies, post offices, banks, bakeries etc.? Also, please mark the places, days and times for any specific markets.

3 University

3.1 Orientation Week (University)

Please mention the details of the orientation week at your university and other necessary details. Often, the International Office conducts an orientation week.

3.2 Enrollment, Semester Ticket and Library Card, Printing Card etc.

Please explain the procedure on how to enroll in your university and also how to get a semester ticket, a library card, a printing card etc. and how to pay for it.

3.3 Semester Ticket

Most of the universities issue a card known as 'semester ticket' to students which enables them to travel for free within a certain region around the university.

How much should they pay for the semester ticket? When it is valid? In which region can they travel with this semester ticket and by which means (bus, train, tram)? Is it mandatory?

3.4 University WIFI

A lot of universities in the world have a common Wi-Fi server called Eduroam. With it, you gain access to free Wi-Fi within the university and possibly your dorm. Sometimes there might be free access networks in the city. However, make sure you don't download anything from torrents or similar sites as it is a monitored network.

Eduroam is a wonderful example of globalization. Please check the following link to find the list of all the universities and research centres connected via Eduroam.

<https://www.eduroam.org/where/>

Please write any specific rules applicable for your university, for example a limit of usage! Explain how to connect to Eduroam and credential for login. Are there any free wifi networks in your city? Mention them.

3.5 Student Management Systems

All universities have one or more online portals to check the list of courses and all its details offered in that particular semester. Also, the students can get their study certificates, transcripts etc. on this platform. Please make sure you get the credentials for logging in during your enrolment at the university.

How do you get credentials? What is the system called? Please add the links for international students. Please add links to those portals.

3.6 University Email

Every student gets their own email in the university domain. Please make sure that you check it regularly so you don't miss any important official announcements from the department or the university.

There may be a possibility to redirect your emails to private accounts (like Gmail, Yahoo). Please ask the student council if you need help.

3.7 Time Table and Classrooms

Please write here how to find your lecture halls and how to create a time table/ how to get help for creating it.

3.8 Lectures

It is very important to attend the first lecture of the course. There, the students can ask the professor for a potential change of the schedule and other important details like the language of the instruction. It is also important to know the requirements of each course and the minimum eligibility to participate in the final exam. So never miss the first lecture!

Please write an example for the eligibility criteria like 50% in the exercise sheets

3.9 Mentoring Program

Do you have any mentoring or peer to peer programs? Please mention the details.

3.10 Academic Adviser

Most of the universities have a course coordinator, council or mentor who helps you in planning your studies. You can always discuss any questions regarding the course with them or the student representatives.

Please write your university coordinator details or any similar thing that you have.

3.11 Psychological Support

FSR please mention the details of the various programs that offer psychological support at your university and other necessary details.

3.12 Offices and Other Rooms

Please mention the office addresses of international students office, faculty office, examination office etc., and also some places where they can sit and work like a coffee shop or so.

3.13 Registration for Exams

Please explain how to register for exams and how the system works at your university.

3.14 Scholarships

Please write about the various scholarships that are available at your university and please add links and deadlines for applying.

3.15 Timings

In general, if you have an appointment with officials it is important to be on time or even a few minutes before.

For lectures mind that there are two different time specifications:

s.t (sine tempore) means a lecture will start at precisely the time mentioned.

For example, 10.00 a.m. s.t means 10.00 a.m.

c.t (cum tempore) means it would start 15 minutes after the mentioned time.

For example, 10.00 a.m. c.t means 10.15 a.m.

Is this relevant to your university?

3.16 Bachelor Thesis

How many credits does it have? How much does it count into the final grade? How can a student find a supervisor for the thesis?

3.17 Master Thesis

How many credits does it have? How much does it count into the final grade? How can a student find a supervisor for thesis? What is the deadline for the submission of the master thesis? And when it is wise to register for it?

There is also a possibility to write your thesis somewhere else like another university or research centers like a Max Planck Institute or even in a company.

Are there other theses? What to do?

3.18 how to Find a Supervisor For the Thesis

Please check the notice boards and your university website for possible offers for a thesis. In general, it is highly dependent on both the university and the professor. Here is an example: First of all make an appointment with the professor. You can ask questions like

1. What are the possible topics?
2. What are the conditions?
3. Is there a possibility to visit any conferences or so?

Do you have any programs or discussions to guide new students on how to choose a supervisor for thesis?

Tip: It is often helpful to talk to the people who are already working in the group you would like to work in before you join it.

3.19 Holidays

The public holidays in German speaking countries vary from state to state so check the following link:

- For Germany: <https://www.officeholidays.com/countries/germany/index.php>
- For Austria: <https://www.feiertage-oesterreich.at/2018/>

Please note that the shops are closed, the bus frequency is low and the time schedule may change.

Keep in mind that there might be some courses or exams during the semester break, so always check before you book tickets for vacation!

3.20 Mensa

The canteen is called Mensa in German. In the University Mensa, all students get subsidized meals. Make sure you carry your semester ticket or student ID when you go.

Where is the mensa? Are there veggie and meat sections? How to find the ingredients? How to pay?

3.21 Maximum Time for Courses

What is the maximum time to complete each degree? Are there possible extensions if you are pregnant or ill?

To get your visa extended without any problems, it is recommended to complete your masters degree within seven semesters if it is a two year master course. In addition, make sure to get at least 20 credits on average per semester.

3.22 Student Representatives

Introduce yourself to the new international students and talk about the opportunities you provide to join.

3.23 Additional Courses

Unlike many other countries, the German universities are quite flexible and encouraging, so you can take any additional courses outside physics like mathematics, music or even learn a new language. You can also always contact the professors and discuss any details regarding the course.

Please add any specific rules or links that might help to find additional courses.

3.24 Sports/Music/Art

Please add what your university offers in these respective fields

4 Life Besides the university

4.1 How to Learn German

Please mention the language courses that your university offers.

In addition to university courses, there are millions of websites, books, apps and several other resources that can help you learn German. Here are some useful resources.

1. <https://learngerman.dw.com/en/languages> (Website to learn German)
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOtgMNKs0Jw&list=PLYzp2xhTw9W1Z9RvnCoveCOW7pkwUMHXy> (Learn German from YouTube video lessons)
3. <https://www.vhs-aktuell.de/programm/german/german-as-a-foreign-language.html> (German courses and certification)
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUghVMaDx7A> (A short guide to learning German on your own)
5. <https://dict.leo.org/german-english/> (German-English dictionary)

4.2 Part Time Jobs

Together with your residence permit you get an information sheet which includes information about your work permission. So take a look there.

Probably it is like this:

If you are registered as a regular student, you can work for 120 full days or 240 half days during one year, whenever you want. You need to collect documents about your working time and be able to proof how much you worked if an agency asks you to do so. Usually, a half day is 4 hours. Everything what is more than 4h is a full day.

For example: You work 3h on Mondays and 5h on Tuesdays. This means that you work one and a half day per week. In very few jobs, a half day is less than 4h. Please ask your employer about this.

You can always ask the international office of your university or you can get the information in the following webpage:

<https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en>

They also offer a chat where you can ask questions in English.

In a preparation year you don't take any technical courses, you only do things to prepare your studies like learning German. In case that you are in a preparation year the working rules above are not for you!

Here is a quick video on how to find a part time job in Germany:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Hh_yiG0hgQ&t=59s

In Austria the rules are different. It is recommended not to earn too much money because then you will have to pay social security and taxes. The amount is somewhere around 400 € per month and changes every year. It is very common to work beside your studies so your local student representatives will know the answers to your questions or at least where to look for them. Just ask them, they will be happy to help. There might be special conditions attached to having a visa, so be careful about that as well.

How can you find part time jobs at your university?

4.3 Places to Visit

Please mention the places to visit in your city and best way of transportation. If there is a free walking tour in your city recommend it. It's a good way to get to know a new city.

4.3 Apps for Buses and Trains

There is an app called DB Navigator. You can use it to find public transport connections in Germany. In general, you can use this app to travel within a city or to distant places. It shows the connections of buses, trains and trams as well.

IOS: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/db-navigator/id343555245?mt=8>

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.hafas.android.db>

Please check out the following link for travelling in Austria:

<http://www.oebb.at/en/>

Moreover, for travelling long distances, you have many means to travel. For example, you can also use services like DB, Flixbus, Bus radar, BlaBlaCar and Ryanair. These are some ways to travel within Germany and in all of Europe as well.

<https://www.bahn.com/en/view/index.shtml> (we suggest to book early for cheap tickets!)

<https://www.flixbus.com/>

<https://www.busradar.com/?currency=EUR>

<https://www.blablacar.com/>

<https://www.goeuro.com/> (It shows different options to travel in Europe like bus, train etc. and compares the prices.)

Sometimes, you get discounts if you buy a group ticket or weekend ticket, so check for all possibilities before you make a reservation.

4.5 Biking

Many cities and towns have separate lanes for bicycle which makes it more comfortable to ride a bicycle. It will be cheaper and often faster than public transportation and is good for your health.

Here is the link to the traffic rules (for Germany)

http://bicyclegermany.com/german_bicycle_laws.html

Here is the link to the traffic rules (for Austria)

<https://www.justlanded.com/english/Austria/Articles/Travel-Leisure/Riding-your-bike-in-Austria>

To find the lanes especially for bicycles, please observe the following sign boards

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euroga_zwischen_Rhein_und_Maas#/media/File:Euroga-Radweg.jpg

Where can they buy used bikes? Where can they find repair shops? Please add information about the city biking system in your city.

4.6 Kid Support

If you have kids don't worry, there are a lot of resources that can help you take care of your child.

Please add the resources your university and city provides for the kid support!

4.7 Winter

Winters in Europe are very cold unlike in tropical countries like India. The consequences are that buses and trains may be delayed or sometimes cancelled, so it is important to take this into account when planning the day. Also be prepared with warm clothes and suitable shoes and take care to avoid frost bites.

4.8 Social Media Pages and Websites

Add your city website and the social media pages of your university

Most cities have social media pages and groups for international people living there and some especially for students. You can join them for latest updates that happen around you in the city! You can also check for accommodation, used furniture or bicycles on those pages.

4.9 Student Discounts

It is very nice that not only in German speaking countries, but also in all of Europe, students are given discounts for literally everything from haircuts to entry tickets to museums, train tickets etc., so make sure you carry your student ID card all the time while you are traveling in Europe and always ask for discounts.

4.10 Daylight Savings

As you may be aware, most of the Western countries do something called 'daylight savings' in which they turn their clock forwards (in summer) or backwards (in winter) for one hour. These are done on specific days at a specific time two times a year, so please make sure you don't miss it, especially if you are travelling. Usually the switch happens on the last Sunday of March at 2.00 A.M to 3.00 A.M and the last Sunday in October at 3.00 A.M to 2.00 A.M.

4.11 Emergency Contacts

Everywhere in Europe you can call the number 112, and they will direct you to the responsible people.

Numbers in Germany:

- Fire/Ambulance: 112
- Police: 110

Numbers in Austria:

- Fire: 122
- Police: 133
- Ambulance: 144

4.12 Formal Emails

Please write the convention used in your university, like how should they address professors and so on.

4.13 Other Useful Links

- There is a YouTube channel called "Bharat in Germany" in which there a lot of videos explaining various things concerning study and life in Germany. Here is the link <https://www.youtube.com/user/himolikd>
- The following website is to compare insurance, credit, electricity, DSL & travel. For example, you can check various companies offering liability insurance and choose one. <https://www.check24.de>

Please add any such links.
Is there anything missing? Please add it somewhere.
Delete Todo list

Todo list

1. Please inform them if your university helps in finding accommodation.
Please also add links. 5
2. Please mention what you can provide to the students to resolve this issue. We suggest for the FSR to collaborate with the International Students office to translate each of those documents and give the international students the "unofficial translations". 5
3. Do you need an appointment in the Rathaus? How do you get one?
Phone number? Address? In Germany: Please check the following link to and if 115 number works at your place. If don't please delete above line. 6
4. What are the typical opening hours for supermarkets in your city?
Where can they find shops like supermarkets, pharmacies, post offices, banks, bakeries etc.? Also, please mark the places, days and times for any specific markets. 8
5. Please mention the details of the orientation week at your university and other necessary details. Often, the International Office conducts an orientation week. 8
6. Please explain the procedure on how to enroll in your university and also how to get a semester ticket, a library card, a printing card etc. and how to pay for it. 8
7. How much should they pay for the semester ticket? When it is valid?
In which region can they travel with this semester ticket and by which means (bus, train, tram)? Is it mandatory? 9
8. Please write any specific rules applicable for your university, for example a limit of usage. Explain how to connect to Eduroam and credential for login. Are there any free WIFI networks in your city? Mention them.
..... 9
9. How do you get credentials? What is the system called? Please add the links for international students. Please add links to those portals. 9
10. Please write here how to find your lecture halls and how to create a timetable/ how to get help for creating it. 9
11. Please write an example for the eligibility criteria like 50% in the exercise sheets. 9
12. Do you have any mentoring or peer to peer programs? Please mention the details. 9
13. Please write your university coordinator details or any similar thing that you have. 10

14. FSR please mention the details of the various programs that offer psychological support at your university and other necessary details.	10
15. Please mention the office addresses of international students office, faculty office, examination office etc., and also some places where they can sit and work like a coffee shop or so.	10
16. Please explain how to register for exams and how the system works at your university.	10
17. Please write about the various scholarships that are available at your university and please add links and deadlines for applying.	10
18. Is this relevant at your university?	10
19. How many credits does it have? How much does it count into the final grade? How can a student find a supervisor for the thesis? What is the deadline for the submission of the master thesis? And when it is wise to register for it?	11
20. Are there other theses? What to do?	11
21. Do you have any programs or discussions to guide new students on how to choose a supervisor for thesis?	11
22. Where is the mensa? Are there veggie and meat sections? How to find the ingredients? How to pay?	12
23. What is the maximum time to complete each degree? Are there possible extensions if you are pregnant or ill?	12
24. Introduce yourself to the new international students and talk about the opportunities you provide to join.	12
25. Please add any specific rules or links that might help to find additional courses . . .	12
26. Please add what your university offers in these respective fields.	12
27. Please mention the language courses that your university offers.	13
28. How can you find part time jobs at your university?	14
29. Please mention the places to visit in your city and best way of transportation. If there is a free walking tour in your city recommend it. It's a good way to get to know a new city.	14
30. Where can they buy used bikes? Where can they find repair shops? Please add information about the city biking system in your city.	15
31. Please add the resources your university and city provides for the kid support! . . .	15
32. Add your city website and the social media pages of your university	15
33. Please write the convention used in your university, like how should they address professors and so on.	16
34. Please add any such links.	17
35. Is there anything missing? Please add it somewhere.	17
36. Delete Todo list	18