

Student experience in Germany





Johan Jonsson, a Swedish student at Aachen University, shares his experience on what it's like to study in Germany.



Classes in Germany

Make sure you go to class well-fed and hydrated to stay concentrated in long sessions!

At my university in Germany, the schedule was the same every week for the entire semester. Some classes were super long - up to four hours with a short break - while most of the classes were two hours with no break.

There was minimal student interaction before, during and after the lecture, so this might be somewhat of an adjustment depending on what you're used to.



Key info: Classes in Germany



Lessons are 2-4 hours long, with small breaks in between.



Studying is very individual, you need to be independent.



Smaller classes are around 20 students, and larger ones are made out of 1,000.



TAs often hold extra lessons to practice topics in detail.

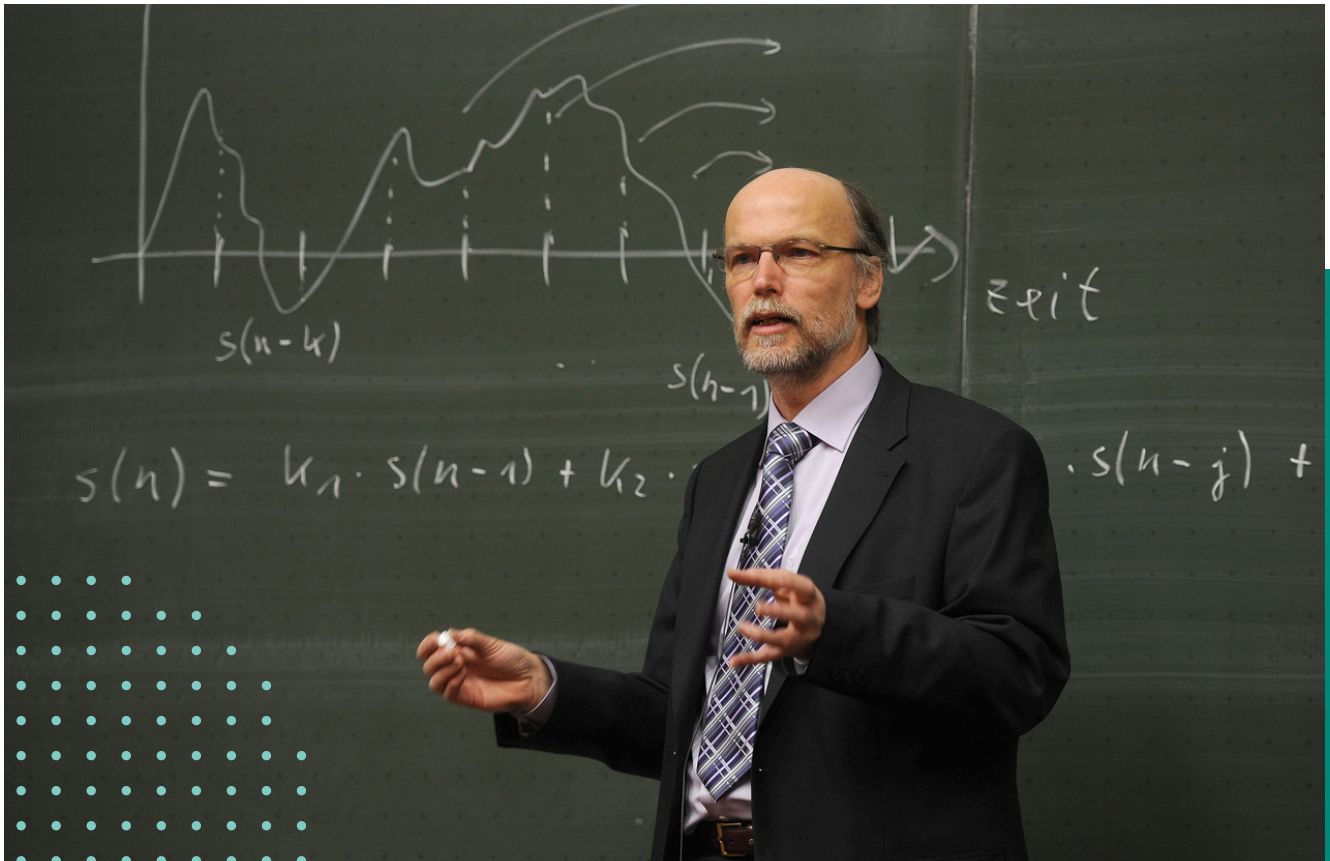
Lectures typically had about 1,000 students and smaller courses would have around 20 students. Higher level courses could have even less.

The lecturers usually present their material with a PowerPoint presentation with minimal student-teacher interaction during lessons.

However, teaching assistants often hold exercises where students could practice what was taught in the lecture.

I definitely recommend attending extra exercises to make sure you keep on top of your studies!

German professors



Coming from a Swedish education background, there were some noticeable differences in formality with the German professors I worked with. When you're studying in Germany, it may seem that the **student-professor relationship is very formal**, and that **lecturers hold complete authority**. If you're used to a more egalitarian style, be prepared for a change!

The good news is that **most of the professors have office hours or their assistants hold sessions where you can ask about the material**.

When you study abroad in Germany, **attend office hours** to understand what your professor wants you to learn and what he/she finds important. Knowing **this will help you get a better grade and will also help you get on the good side of your professor**.

Grading system in Germany

Make sure you study, attend class, and are completely prepared for big exams. Some classes include projects or a lab depending on the course subject, but most courses only have one exam on which your entire grade is based. **Attendance isn't mandatory** for most courses, so the responsibility is on you.

In class in Germany, course material was graded between 1-4, with 1 being the best. As a 4 is the average grade in difficult courses, **you'll need to work hard for your grades when you're studying in Germany!**

German language



Unless you are in a specific program where courses are taught in English, **you will need to know German** to study in Germany. While this seems like a more obvious point when giving study abroad tips, it's important to know that **students will be expected to know fluent German when enrolled in programs taught in the German language.**

Even if you are in an English program when you're studying abroad in Germany, learn some German phrases to show that you've made an effort with the language for the best experience. Though you can get by speaking English, **people may not always be willing to speak English with you, especially at your university.** There are plenty of resources to help you learn before you go.

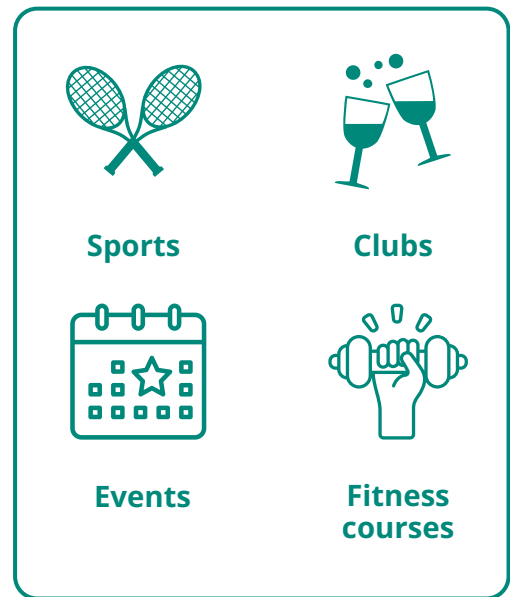


Student life

There will be a **lot of sports clubs and activities** that you can join through your university. When I was studying in Germany, there were several activities and fitness courses that you could join without even signing up!

Look out for events and get involved! German friends aren't hard to make, but you'll need to get out of your comfort zone. Where I was studying in Germany, there were quite a few international students, especially from Europe and Asia.

There are so many reasons to study in Germany, and one of the best study abroad tips in any destination is to **embrace student life and meet new people**.



Student accommodation

Finding accommodation in any study abroad destination may seem tricky. Find out as soon as possible whether you need to register for housing or if you need to find it on your own!

I applied for university accommodation during my studies, but acceptance is sometimes not guaranteed, even for international students.

There are several options for students who decide to study in Germany. Most universities have **dorms where students share a kitchen, but shared apartments may also be available**. Many students prefer to find their own accommodation in the city.

Holiday breaks

University semesters in Germany are typically divided into a Spring term from April to the end of September and an Autumn term from October to the end of March.

While one of the most important study abroad tips is to enjoy Germany's incredible location in the center of Europe, **don't book any holiday trips until you know when you need to be on campus for exams!**

- If you're lucky, your exams will be scheduled so that you have a break between semesters.
- If not, your exam could be scheduled right before your next semester starts.

Make sure you **stay organized and plan** around attending every test and class in Germany!

Getting around in Germany

German cities have great public transportation, making it a budget-friendly country for students to have an active lifestyle.

When you study in Germany, you'll get a transport ticket that covers all travel costs within the state for a semester.

So, try to buy as few transport passes as possible until you get your free ticket!

Pro tips

Have cash on hand

Depending on where you're from, you might be surprised to find how **many shops and services only accept cash**. Coming from Sweden, I didn't expect this and had to learn to keep enough cash on hand to get around the city. Germans seem to love cash!



Shop before Sunday

The last piece of advice in this list of study abroad tips is to **make sure not to leave your shopping until Sunday** - and be ready to pay in cash! Do your shopping during the week or on Saturday because **everything, including grocery stores, seems to be closed on Sundays**.



