

VISA TO STUDY IN GERMANY

A step-by-step guide for international students



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Who needs a visa?

Depending on your citizenship, you may need a visa and/or residence permit to study in Germany.

Citizenship	Needs a student visa	Needs a residence permit
EU, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein	NO	NO
Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, UK, USA, Andorra, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Monaco, San Marino	NO	YES
All other countries	YES	YES

Note:

A residence permit is not the same as a student visa. Student visa allows you to enter Germany and stay for up to 3 months. After that, you need a residence permit. You can use your student visa to apply for a residence permit.



Types of student visas in Germany

THE PROSPECTIVE STUDENT VISA

Visum zur Studienbewerbung

- Allows you entry into Germany for up to 3 months or 6 months with an extension.
- You can use the Prospective Student Visa to apply for a full Student Visa.

THE STUDENT VISA

Visum zu Studienzwecken

- Allows you to enter Germany for **up to 3 months after being accepted** to study for a Master's degree.
- You can use the Student Visa to apply for a residence permit.
- It's important to remember that other German visas, such as a language course or tourist visa, don't apply to students wanting to study for a Master's degree in Germany and cannot be converted to a student visa.

Financial requirements to study in Germany



International students wanting to study for a Master's degree in Germany must complete a *Finanzierungsnachweis* to show proof of financial resources. Typically, you'll need to prove you have access to **roughly 11,208 euros** per year, also known as *Regelbedarf* - which refers to the estimated living costs required for a student in Germany each year.

You'll be asked for proof of financing when you apply for a visa. You may also need to present it when you apply for a residence permit in Germany.

Meeting the financial requirement

You can show how you plan to finance your Master's program through one of the following ways:

- Funds in a blocked account (Sperrkonto) - this is the most common way of proving your financial means
- Your parents' income/financial asset statements
- A sponsorship letter from a permanent German resident who agrees to cover expenses on your behalf
- Scholarship award letter for your Master's

The money you hope to earn while working alongside your Master's degree won't be counted towards your evidence of financial support.

Checklist: Student visa application documents

You'll need the following documents to apply for a visa to study for a Master's degree in Germany:

- **For a Prospective Student Visa:** proof of qualifications appropriate for admission to a Master's degree such as a Bachelor's degree or equivalent
- **For a Student Visa:** proof of admission to a Master's degree at a university in Germany

General documents

- Proof of financial resources to support yourself during your studies
- Your passport (must be valid for the entirety of your Master's degree)
- A health insurance certificate
- Two passport pictures
- Proof of language proficiency (German or English)



How to register for a residence permit

- Step 1** Find your local *Ausländerbehörde*
- Step 2** Register your home address at *Bürgeramt*
- Step 3** Get a health insurance
- Step 4** Prepare the required documents for the residence permit
- Step 5** Submit all documents
- Step 6** Wait for your residence card

Registering for a residence permit



Step 1: Find your local *Ausländerbehörde*

Once you enter Germany, you must **locate the *Ausländerbehörde*** (Foreigner's Authority) closest to you. If you need an appointment, book the first available date, as the residence permit processing period can take up to two months.

Step 2: Register your address at *Bürgeramt*

You must **register your address within 14 days of entering Germany and receive *Meldebestätigung*** (Registration Certificate). To do this, **find your city's *Bürgeramt*** (also known as *Bürgerbüro* or Citizens' Office in English)—larger cities have multiple, so choose the one closest to where you live. You can use the *Deutsche Post* [directory of *Bürgerämter*](#) to find the nearest office.

Book an appointment at the *Bürgeramt* and bring the following documents:

- **Proof of residence certificate (*Wohnungsgeberbestätigung*)** - your landlord can provide this document. A rental contract isn't enough.
- **Your passport**
- **Your student visa** (if you needed one)
- **Registration form** - you'll complete this one at the *Bürgeramt*

Step 3: Get a health insurance

You must have health insurance from the first day of your arrival in Germany.

Some students may be covered by policies in your home country:

- A **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)** will cover students from other European Union countries.
- **Germany recognizes health insurance** from these countries:
 - Bosnia-Herzegovina
 - Iceland
 - Israel
 - Liechtenstein
 - Montenegro
 - Morocco
 - North Macedonia
 - Norway
 - Serbia
 - Tunisia
 - Turkey

Step 4: Prepare the required documents for the residence permit

You'll need the following documents for the residence permit:

- Application form - you can download it from your Ausländerbehörde website or at the office
- Your passport
- Your student visa (if you needed one)
- Proof of financial means
- Certificate of enrollment/letter of approval or conditional acceptance into a German university
- Residence registration certificate (Meldebestätigung)
- Health insurance certificate
- One passport-size photo

You may also need to pay an application fee. Make sure to bring proof that you've paid the fee, such as a confirmation receipt.

Step 5: Submit all documents to the *Ausländerbehörde*

On your appointment date, go to your local Ausländerbehörde and submit all of the documents listed above.

Note: If you haven't done so before the appointment, ask for the Residence Permit Application Form at the office and fill it out.

Your appointment will also include an interview with the immigration officer.

Step 6: Wait for your residence card

If you've submitted all of your documents and met all of the requirements, you should receive a residence card within a few weeks, but the process can take up to 2 months.

You'll either receive the card by post or a letter instructing you to pick it up at the Ausländerbehörde.

Working while studying in Germany

You can work while studying for your Master's degree in Germany.

The number of hours you're allowed to work and the permit required will depend on your nationality and visa status:

Students from the EU, EEA, and Swiss nationals can work in Germany without restriction. If you work more than 20 hours per week, you must pay Germany National Insurance, which will be deducted from your earnings.

International students from other countries can work for 120 days per year without a permit as long as they work for a recognized employer. If you want to work more than 120 days, you must apply for permission from your local job center.

Staying in Germany after graduation

Your right to work in Germany after graduation will depend on your citizenship:

- **EU, EEA, and Swiss nationals** can work in Germany without a permit after graduating.
- **Students from other countries** can apply for two types of visas after graduating:
 - Job search opportunity card: if you don't have a job offer
 - Work visa for qualified professionals: if you've received a job offer

On the [Study in Germany site](#), you can learn more about getting a job in Germany after your studies and the process of settling in the country.



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