Choosing the right university

Prospective students can choose between different types of higher education institutions in Germany: there are universities, universities of applied sciences, private universities and universities of cooperative education in many different German cities. Every type of higher education institution has particular areas of specialisation.

Types of higher education institutions

Focus on science: universities

Universities mainly teach theoretical knowledge and emphasise research. Only universities – and other higher education institutions of equal status – have the right to confer doctoral degrees and can thus award doctorates in Germany. Universities normally offer a wide range of different subjects, but some have specialised and then call themselves technical universities (Technische Universität, TU) or colleges of education (Pädagogische Hochschule, PH). Some universities, such as the Hanover Medical School [https://www.mh-hannover.de/index.php?id=2&L=1] or the German Sport University Cologne [https://www.dshs-koeln.de/english/], even focus solely on a single subject area.

Focus on practice: universities of applied sciences

Universities of applied sciences have a practice-oriented academic approach. They focus more on professional application than on theory. Their range of subjects comprises specific fields such as technology, economics, social work or medicine. In the practical phases, students at universities of applied sciences complete work placements, longer project phases or entire practical semesters, often in businesses.

Colleges of art and music

Colleges of art and music train young artists such as musicians, architects, fine artists and designers. Admission requirements include a specific talent which applicants must demonstrate in an entrance examination. Especially talented students may sometimes also be
admitted without a qualification for admission to higher education.

Universities of cooperative education

A dual study programme combines academic studies with vocational training or practical phases in a company. This may be an interesting option for people who prefer to learn practically and start their careers quickly.

STUDENTS IN GERMANY

In the 2016/17 winter semester there were 2.8 million students in Germany, including...

...1.77 million at universities
...956,928 at universities of applied sciences
...35,607 at colleges of art
...and a total of 357,835 international students.

Funding bodies

There are several different funding models for higher education institutions in Germany. Most higher education institutions are state-run; others are operated privately, and some by the church.

State funding bodies

Approximately 60 percent of higher education institutions in Germany are funded by the Federal Government and the federal states, meaning their funding body is the state. The majority of students are enrolled at this type of higher education institution and mostly do not pay tuition fees. The federal state of Baden-Württemberg however has recently adopted tuition fees for international students from non-EU states.

Private funding bodies

There are also higher education institutions that are state-approved but privately operated. This applies to approximately 30 percent of higher education institutions in Germany. Most of these are universities of applied sciences that are valued for their close ties to industry and their international orientation. Some of them however charge high tuition fees.

Religious funding bodies

A further 10 percent of higher education institutions are run by one of the churches in Germany. They are state-approved and often also open to students of other denominations. They usually focus on a specific field such as theology, philosophy, social work or education.

TIP: A degree from a private or church-run higher education institution in Germany is only valid on the international labour market if the higher education institution is state-approved. The German Rectors’ Conference maintains a current list of all state-run and state-approved higher education institutions in Germany.
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN GERMANY

In the 2016/17 winter semester there were a total of 426 higher education institutions in Germany, including 106 universities, 246 universities of applied sciences, 52 colleges of art and 16 theological universities.

Location

Choosing the right location for studying is also important. Would you prefer a major university town such as Munich, Cologne or Hamburg? Or a smaller city that nonetheless has many students among its population, like Heidelberg or Göttingen? Places that are not so very well known for their higher education institution often have the advantage that lecturers and professors are more accessible; finding accommodation is also easier.

Contact information for Higher Education Institutions

These data have been kindly made available to the DAAD by the German Rectors’ Conference - The Voice of the Universities.

Town:
- all -
  Aachen
  Aalen
  Albstadt
  Alfter
  Amberg
  Ansbach
  Aschaffenburg
  Augsburg
  Bad Honnourg

Type of HEI:
- all -
  University
  University of Applied Sciences
  College of art and music

Search »

Gaining professional experience

Dual study programmes

A dual study programme combines academic studies with experience in a company and vocational training. Dual study programmes are very popular in Germany due to their practical orientation.

More »
[deutschland/nach-deutschland/angebote/en/57321-dual-study-programmes/]

Updated 2018-07-05