



GUIDE FOR IB STUDENTS CONSIDERING HIGHER EDUCATION IN GERMANY

This guide provides a brief introduction to the German higher education system and its application process, as well as information relevant to IB students

Context

Germany offers a robust and renowned higher education system, and many individual institutions have established strong names within particular fields. The country offers a high quality of life, support and scholarship opportunities and good employment prospects. Germany's public universities offer the majority of courses free of charge, for both domestic and international students, and most major German cities have at least one highly ranked research university.¹

Institution and degree types

Germany has around 400 higher education institutions; more than 100 universities; over 200 Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs; *Fachhochschulen*); and almost 100 specialized institutions such as medical universities, art schools and colleges of public administration.²

UASs focus on practical, applied and professionally oriented education, offer courses that lead to bachelor's

or master's degrees, and are known for close relationships with businesses, internships, work placements and practical projects.

The bachelor's degree is the most common undergraduate degree. A bachelor's will usually take six semesters (three years) to complete, and can focus on one main subject (a single honours degree, or "mono bachelor") or a combination of several subjects (a joint honours degree or combined bachelor's).

Some courses offer a *Diplom* or *Staatsexamen*. *Diplom* courses tend to be offered in the technical and engineering fields, while the *Staatsexamen* can be taken in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, law, food chemistry, and some teaching degrees.³

Admission requirements

Undergraduate admissions procedures and requirements in Germany are somewhat complex, and can vary considerably depending on the field of study, state, institution

¹ <http://www.topuniversities.com/universities/country/germany>

² www.hrk.de/

³ www.uni-assist.de

and even individual department. If you think you'd like to pursue higher education in Germany, you are strongly encouraged to consider well in advance what you want to study and where.

For most areas of study, the individual universities are responsible for the final admissions decisions, but some fields have national level admissions procedures. Therefore, you should determine in advance whether you want to go into a field with national admissions or not, and you should inquire at the university of your choice about all the necessary prerequisites.⁴

There are a few important points you should understand before beginning the application process in Germany.

The Hochschulzugangsberechtigung

In general, to study in Germany you need to have a recognized *Hochschulzugangsberechtigung* (HZB) or "higher education entrance qualification". For German students, this is typically the Abitur, but the HZB may come in many forms, including the IB diploma.

If you don't meet the minimum qualifications then you must take a preparatory course at a [Studienkolleg](#) and then a compulsory assessment test known as a *Feststellungsprüfung*, covering areas relevant to the intended course of study. After successfully completing the assessment, graduates are permitted to study the corresponding subject areas anywhere in Germany.⁵

Statements of comparability

Students with German nationality who do not have a German Abitur may need to obtain a "Statement of Comparability" (*Bescheinigung*) to study at a public university. These are official documents issued by the central education office in the same state as the university. International students need to apply directly at the university. Not all states have such recognition centres, so be sure to check with your intended university well in advance.⁶

⁴ www.study-in.de/en/

⁵ <https://www.daad.de/deutschland/nach-deutschland/voraussetzungen/en/6017-admission-requirements/>

⁶ <https://www.kmk.org/zab/central-office-for-foreign-education/statement-of-comparability-for-foreign-higher-education-qualifications.html>

Numerus Clausus

Some degree courses (i.e. dentistry, medicine, veterinary medicine and pharmacy) have more applicants than available seats. Such courses are referred to as *Numerus Clausus* (NC), Latin meaning "limited" or "closed", and applicants need to compete for admission to these courses. Some courses have national restrictions applying to all German universities, and others may have a local restriction specific to the state or university. The actual minimum NC requirements change every semester based on current supply and demand, and are calculated based on the grades of the received applications. So, when applying, the exact level of the NC may be unknown, but the cut-offs from previous semesters are good indicators. Certain subjects may be weighted more heavily than others (ie mathematics and physics for an engineering course).

Admission types

Once admitted, entitlement is either **direct** or **indirect** and either **general** or **subject-specific**. Direct enrollment is possible for all courses without admission restrictions (i.e. non-NC).

- Direct: the applicant can start their degree straight away.
- Indirect: before beginning their degree, the applicant must pass the *Feststellungsprüfung*.
- General: the applicant may study any subject.
- Subject-specific: the applicant may only study subjects in a specific field.⁷

uni-assist

[uni-assist](#) is a centralized admissions portal, run by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and handles international applications for its member universities. An online application via uni-assist's online portal may be compulsory, although a separate application direct to the university may also be required. Some national NC courses are also processed through uni-assist.

⁷ www.uni-assist.de

Applying

Unless applying for a national NC course, Diploma Programme (DP) students will typically apply directly to the individual university in which they are interested. Applications from IB students are generally handled in the same fashion regardless of where the student took the DP.

Admissions processes vary between institutions and between courses within institutions. Some universities may require applications to go through www.uni-assist.de, while others may have their own application forms. Sometimes both online and print applications are required and both must reach the university by the application deadline. Make sure you check the information from your chosen university before applying.

Students applying to public universities may need the relevant state board of education to provide a Statement of Comparability during the application process, so ensure that you know the location of the university, the state's requirements, and factor this extra step into your timeline.

Applying to NC courses

DP students (assuming all conditions are met) are usually considered to have the same status as German citizens with regard to admissions, and compete with German applicants for the majority of NC course seats. All others compete for the remaining places (usually 5–10%).⁸ As mentioned, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or pharmacy have restricted admission at all public universities, and the application and admission procedures for these NC courses are run by the *Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung*. For other courses, DP applicants may apply directly to the universities or via uni-assist. Students who are required to pass the *Studienkolleg* or are applying for a preparatory pre-study German course, typically need to apply through uni-assist.

Some tips for applying to NC courses

- Send applications to a variety of universities/courses
- Choose less popular locations
- Understand the point system and how to compile additional points
- Apply for summer semester admission, which may have fewer applicants⁹



Application documents

Apart from the average required grade, universities may also define additional criteria, such as letters of motivation, tests or selection interviews. To ensure the best chances of acceptance, take care to provide all the documentation requested, make sure all your documentation is certified, and ensure that you've filled out all your information correctly. An application fee may be charged. While specific documents and processes will vary, you'll typically be asked to submit:

- an officially certified copy of the HZB with the subjects and grades from the final two years of high school in the original language
- a certified translation of the subjects and marks
- proof of language proficiency (an officially certified copy or online verification code).

Language requirements

The language of instruction is German in most courses, requiring international applicants to submit proof of proficiency in the German language through a language test result or by taking a preparatory course. Under certain circumstances, DP Language A German and Language B German higher level (HL) courses may satisfy language requirements. If not, you may need to take a university-approved test. You should contact the

⁸ https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/studium/download/general_information.pdf

⁹ <https://www.daad.de/deutschland/nach-deutschland/bewerbung/en/8680-applying-for-a-study-programme/>

university of your choice to find out about the language requirements because universities decide which tests and courses they will accept.

If you plan to take an English-language course, you do not need to provide proof of German, but you may need to provide proof of English-language proficiency. A searchable database of English-taught courses is provided at www.daad.de.

Timeline

The academic year is divided into two semesters: October to March (winter) and April to September (summer). At many universities it's possible to apply during either semester. Often the application period for the winter semester starts in May and generally ends on 15 July. For summer, it starts in December and ends on 15 January. However, application deadlines vary between institutions and even between courses within the same university. The application deadline for international students may also differ. Be careful to check the specific dates for your chosen course. It's recommended that you submit applications at least six weeks before the deadline. You should expect to receive a formal acceptance or rejection approximately one to two months after the deadline has passed. These dates often differ for private universities.

Student visas

Students from countries within the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland, and a number of other countries, do not need a visa. Other countries have relaxed visa policies, but have restrictions on work. Most other students will need to apply for a visa before arrival. Those already accepted into a course can apply for a student visa, while those awaiting confirmation or

sitting entrance exams will need an applicant visa. It can take several months for visas to be issued, so apply as early as possible.

Tuition fees, living costs and funding

At public universities, there are no tuition fees for undergraduate courses. The majority of students simply pay a small "semester fee" of typically no more than €300 per semester. Fees are charged at private universities. Living costs vary depending on the location, with major cities being more expensive. In general, it's recommended to budget around €700 per month to cover expenses. The DAAD also provides many scholarships for international students, and lists other opportunities on their website. University websites are also a good source of information about scholarships.

Information specific to the IB Diploma Programme

Generally, the full IB diploma along with certain qualifying conditions is required for entry into German universities. According to the national policy in place since 1986 ([Vereinbarung über die Anerkennung des International Baccalaureate Diploma](#)), the IB diploma is recognized as a qualification (HZB) for entry to higher education in Germany if it was gained after 12 consecutive years of full-time schooling, and the following conditions are met.

- The six examination subjects include:
 - two languages, at least one of which is a continued foreign language as Language A or Language B HL

- history, geography, economics, psychology, philosophy, social anthropology, business and management or global politics
- biology, chemistry or physics
- mathematics (mathematical methods or mathematics HL or further mathematics in conjunction with mathematics HL); from examination year 2021: mathematics: analysis and approaches HL or mathematics: applications and interpretations HL. Mathematics: analysis and approaches SL or mathematics: applications and interpretations SL obtained in examination year 2021 shall be regarded as subject-specific university entrance qualifications for technical universities and universities providing access only to courses of study not falling within the mathematical/scientific/technical field. art/design, music, theatre, film, literature and performance, a further modern foreign language, Latin, classical Greek, general chemistry, applied chemistry, environmental systems and societies, computer science, design technology, world religions, or sports, exercise and health science.
- Either a natural science (biology, chemistry or physics) or a mathematics subject must be taken at HL.
- All subjects must have been studied continuously for two consecutive years.
- At least grade 4 must be awarded for each subject. If a grade 3 is awarded in one subject only, this may be compensated by grade 5 in another subject at the same or higher level provided at least 24 points in total have been achieved.
- German diploma holders from a school outside Germany, who did not study German in the DP, must provide evidence of an adequate knowledge of German as determined by the individual German states.

If the conditions above are not fulfilled, but the student has been awarded the IB diploma, the student must pass an additional examination in accordance with the “*Framework regulation for entry to higher education with foreign educational certification for preparatory courses of study and for the assessment test*” (“*Rahmenordnung für den Hochschulzugang mit ausländischen Bildungsnachweisen für die Ausbildung an den Studienkollegs und für die Feststellungsprüfung*”).

Recognition as a subject-specific qualification for entry to higher education is also possible in the form of a successfully completed one-year higher education course in a country whose school leaving certificates give access to higher education in Germany, either directly or after a successfully completed one-year course of study.

The IB Career-related Programme (CP) is not formally recognized in Germany at this time. CP students wishing to study in Germany should contact the individual university to determine their eligibility for entry.

For NC courses

For applications to NC courses, the average grade for an IB diploma will be calculated in the state in which the certification is evaluated. The calculation of the average grade (N) will be based on the total points (P) and on a maximum of 42 points (Pmax) and a minimum of 24 points (Pmin). Any extra points achieved will also be taken into consideration. Points totals between 42 and 45 will be equated to the German average grade of 1.0.¹⁰ The calculation is made using the following formula:

$$N = 1 + 3 \frac{P_{\max} - P}{P_{\max} - P_{\min}}$$

N = *gesuchte Note (Durchschnittsnote)*

P = *im Zeugnis ausgewiesene Gesamtpunktzahl*

¹⁰ https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/1986/1986_03_10-Vereinbarung-Baccalaureate-Dipl.pdf

$P_{max} = 42$ Punkte (IB-Gesamtpunktzahl ohne

Zusatzpunkte) $P_{min} = 24$ Punkte (unterer Eckwert)

$N = 1.0$ (für $42 < P < 45$)

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$N = 1.0$ (für $42 < P < 45$)

Verifying results with uni-assist

If you wish to apply before DP results are issued, uni-assist can verify your exam results online until the end of August in the same year. In this case, you must approach your school in May and give permission for the IB to supply your exam results to uni-assist. Students must notify uni-assist that the IB has made their results available. There is no automatic procedure to verify all available test results from the IB. Please make sure you submit the following documents.

- Your IB diploma with an official Transcript of Grades issued by the IB.
- Your certificates from your final two years in the IB Programme sent in authenticated form from your school—regardless of whether your exam results have been verified online or not.
- Your certificate from Year 10 or certification proving at least 12 consecutive school years.
- An Approval of Qualifications document from Germany if you have one (not compulsory).

The Gemischtsprachige IB Diploma

The IB-Agreement also includes the *Gemischtsprachige* IB Diploma (GIB), a bilingual IB diploma that includes three subjects taught and assessed in German: history, biology or chemistry and either language A or language B. Students also have the option to take theory of knowledge (TOK) and mathematics: analysis and approaches in German. Applicants have to meet the same requirements as stated above concerning subjects and course level and marks/grading.

Where IB students applying to Germany come from

In 2015, 1,660 transcripts were sent to Germany by 579 students from 74 countries. That's 2.9 transcripts per student. Just over a third of transcripts came from students undertaking the DP in Germany, and the remainder came from a wide variety of origins including Europe, Latin America and Asia. Of the 1,071 transcripts sent from outside of Germany, about half came from German passport holders.

Where IB students send transcripts

IB students send transcripts to a wide variety of institutions in Germany. Over 200 in fact. The most common transcript destinations are unsurprisingly uni-assist and the state education boards, because uni-assist processes applications for a number of institutions, and the state

boards require the transcripts for verification purposes. However, around 60% of transcripts went directly to the higher education institutions.

Due to the varied nature of admissions procedures in Germany, it is impossible for the IB to determine exactly which universities DP students are applying to. Below are listed, in alphabetical order, the 10 bodies that received the most transcripts in 2015. Four of these are universities. Nonetheless, there may be other universities that take in greater numbers of IB students via admissions procedures other than direct application (ie NC courses).

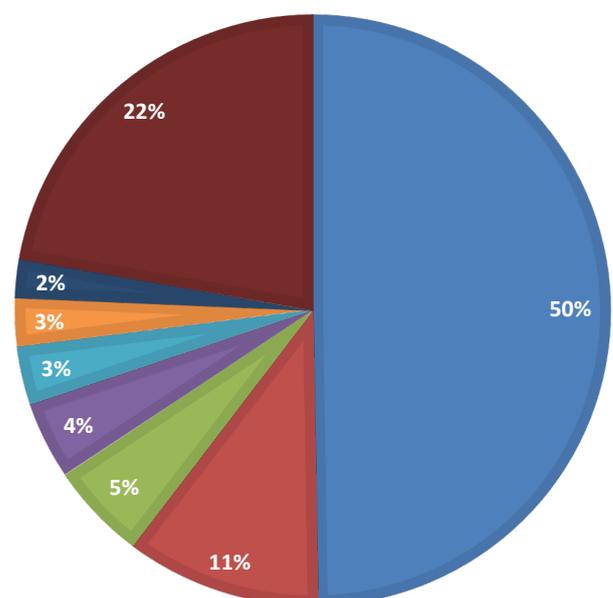


Figure 1: Origins of IB transcripts sent to Germany in 2018.



INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION
Bezirksregierung Düsseldorf	State board for Dusseldorf. Universities in the state include: University of Dusseldorf and UAS Dusseldorf, among others.
Hochschulstart.de	Central body that processes applications for over 700 local NC courses and medical related national NC courses (i.e. medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and pharmacy).
Jacobs University	Jacobs University is a private, independent university in Bremen offering courses in English. Undergraduate applications are accepted through the Common Application. A score of 6 or 7 in IB English A: Literature, and English A: Language and Literature is accepted as proof of English proficiency.
Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium	State board for Lower Saxony. Universities in the state include: Leibniz University of Hanover, University of Gottingen, Osnabruck UAS, Lüneburg University and University of Oldenburg.
Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen	RWTH Aachen University is a research university in Aachen, North Rhine-Westphalia. IB students require a federal recognition of their university entrance qualification certificate issued by the Certificate Recognition Office in the respective federal state to apply.
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg	Heidelberg University is a public research university in Heidelberg, Baden-Württemberg. The application procedure is determined by the course you wish to apply for, but applicants must apply to the university for all subjects. Proof of German proficiency may be required.
Technische Universität München	The Technical University of Munich is a research university with campuses in Munich, Garching and Freising-Weihenstephan. For IB specific application information, see: http://www.tum.de/en/studies/application-and-acceptance/applicants-with-an-ib-international-baccalaureate-diploma/ .
Uni-Assist	Central application processing body for member institutions and some national NC courses.
Zeugnisenerkennungsstelle Für Den Freistaat Bayern	State board for the Free State of Bavaria. Universities in the state include: Technical University of Munich, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg and the University of Wurzburg.
Zeugnisenerkennungsstelle Regierungspraesidium Stuttgart	State board for Baden-Württemberg. Universities in the state include: Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, University of Tübingen and Heidelberg University.



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