At a Glance

A Short Portrait of Freie Universität Berlin
Freie Universität Berlin is a young, international university with a unique history. It is one of eleven Universities of Excellence in Germany. In the global competition among universities Freie Universität takes its place as an international network university. The university’s offices abroad in Beijing, Brussels, Cairo, New Delhi, New York, Moscow, and São Paulo provide a platform for international cooperation. In the 2017 ranking of the *Times Higher Education* magazine, Freie Universität was listed among the five best German universities. In the same ranking the humanities at Freie Universität were found to be among the best 20 globally. The Funding Atlas issued by the German Research Foundation also places Freie Universität among the top five German universities. Located in the quiet southwestern part of Berlin, the university is part of one of the largest research sites in Europe.
FREEDOM CARRIES AN OBLIGATION

Freie Universität Berlin was founded by students and scholars on December 4, 1948, with the support of the American Allies and Berlin politicians as a response to the persecution of students critical of the system at Universität Unter den Linden in the Soviet sector of the divided city of Berlin. These students and scholars wanted to study, teach, and carry out research at Freie Universität, free of political influence. Thanks to generous donations from the United States, Freie Universität was able to construct several new central building complexes including the Benjamin Franklin university hospital complex and the Henry Ford Building, the central lecture building. Based on its founding tradition, Freie Universität’s seal bears the Latin terms for truth, justice, and liberty. The university presents its Freedom Award to public figures who have made a special contribution toward the cause of freedom, among them the musician Daniel Barenboim, the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, Carla Del Ponte, and the South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

In 1963, U.S. President John F. Kennedy gave a programmatic speech at Freie Universität.
The founding of Freie Universität Berlin was facilitated through international support, and international impulses have shaped its research and teaching ever since. In order to survive, both on an academic and an intellectual level, Freie Universität established connections from its geographically isolated position in West Berlin to organizations and personalities in Western Germany, Europe, and the world beyond. What began as a necessity rapidly evolved into a successful strategy: currently, Freie Universität has approximately 180 partnerships with scholarly institutions worldwide. The university is a drawing card for researchers from abroad. Freie Universität is the location in Germany most often selected for visiting scholars through the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Twenty-two percent of the students and doctoral students come from abroad.
Freie Universität is located in the leafy residential district of Dahlem in southwestern Berlin. Various types of research institutions are located here, including four Max Planck Institutes, the Zuse Institute Berlin, and the German Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing. Around the beginning of the 20th century, following Prussia’s plans to establish a “German Oxford,” Dahlem developed into a center for research of the highest caliber. The first new buildings housed government science agencies and new research institutes of the University of Berlin. The Kaiser Wilhelm Society – forerunner of the present-day Max Planck Society – was founded in 1911 and established several institutes in Dahlem. A dynamic group of researchers carried out pioneering research resulting in numerous Nobel Prizes, including Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and Werner Heisenberg. Since its foundation, Freie Universität has been using buildings formerly belonging to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society and, in addition, has added numerous architecturally innovative buildings.
The years 1968, 1990, and 2007 are milestones in the history of Freie Universität. During the 1960s, the university was the scene of student protests that provided the impulse for more openness, equality, and democracy. After German unification in 1990, Freie Universität Berlin revamped itself. The university’s research performance increased markedly, due partly to emphasis placed on specific cross-disciplinary research areas. The year 2007 was another important year for Freie Universität: it was the university with the highest number of approved funding applications in the German Excellence Initiative, becoming one of the Universities of Excellence in Germany. In 2012, Freie Universität succeeded in defending this title in the second round of the Excellence competition. In the new round of the Excellence competition, called Excellence Strategy, Freie Universität is joining forces with Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. The four institutions are applying together.

A new building complex was opened in the spring of 2015. It houses numerous smaller academic departments.
Freie Universität’s Botanic Garden is one of the largest of its type in the world. It attracts 300,000 visitors annually.

**FACTS AND FIGURES**

**Students:** approx. 33,000 | **Professors:** 357, incl. 48 joint appointments with non-university research institutes; 136 fixed-term professors | **Departments and Central Institutes:** 11 Academic Departments, 1 joint Medical School with Humboldt-Universität, 4 Central Institutes | **Degree Programs:** 178 | **Doctoral Programs:** 52 | **Collaborative Research Centers:** 10 as host university and 9 as participating institution; 4 as part of Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, and 9 as participating institution | **Government Subsidies:** 329 million euros, 26 million euros of this amount is for pension and health plans (2017) | **Expended External Funds:** 132 million euros (2017)

The figures are from 2018 and exclude Medicine, unless stated otherwise.
VARIETY IN SUBJECT AREAS AND RESEARCH

The broadest spectrum of research in the humanities in Germany at Freie Universität Berlin comes together under the auspices of the Dahlem Humanities Center. One unique feature is the large number of specialized subjects such as Ancient Near Eastern studies and Jewish studies. The Center for Area Studies clusters the regional studies research on North and Latin America, Eastern Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and individual European countries. The Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science is the largest political science institute in Germany. Special emphasis is placed on physics, mathematics, and computer science, as well as the life sciences and Earth sciences. The broad spectrum also includes the Department of Veterinary Medicine, one of five veterinary schools in Germany. Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin is the medical school jointly operated by Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Freie Universität Berlin is one of the best research universities in Germany.
STUDYING IN A STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

About 33,000 students are enrolled in 178 degree programs. The centrally located Student Services Center is the first point of contact for advice about studying at Freie Universität Berlin. There are several mentoring programs to support students in all the different phases of studying. Exchange programs for students have played an important role from the very beginning: the first exchange students went to Stanford University, U.S.A., in 1949. Currently, Freie Universität participates in the programs Erasmus+ and Promos, which is organized by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The university also maintains agreements with 90 universities for direct exchange. According to statistics from the DAAD, Freie Universität is one of the three most important host universities in Germany for Erasmus participants from other countries, and it is the university in Germany that sends the most students abroad with a DAAD scholarship. Junior researchers are supported in structured doctoral programs under the auspices of Dahlem Research School.

The Philological Library has excellent facilities for both students and faculty. It contains 750,000 printed volumes.
The general career preparation courses in the bachelor’s degree programs and the Career Service of Freie Universität help to prepare students for the workplace. In addition, Freie Universität encourages the formation of companies by its students, graduates, and faculty. Freie Universität along with Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin is one of twelve universities in Germany to be recognized by the German Federal Ministry of Economics for its strategy for supporting start-ups. A center for company founders can offer young entrepreneurs office space with 100 work areas as well as advice and support during their start-up phase. Numerous successful companies have emerged from the university environment, e.g., whether as spin-offs in information technology or the natural sciences or as service providers. Freie Universität has been the recipient of various employer awards, including awards for the introduction of environmental protection measures and for the exemplary management of human resources facilitating equal opportunities. The Dual Career and Family Service offers support to employees and students with balancing the responsibilities of family and professional life. Freie Universität also has a program to promote health.

Various research projects have resulted in new business ideas.
Researchers at Freie Universität Berlin regularly open their institutes, laboratories, and libraries to the public, for example, during the Long Night of the Sciences or open house days. The Center for Cooperation with Schools organizes various activities open to schoolchildren. These include a children’s university and a summer school with many activities in the special labs for schoolchildren, NatLab and PhysLab. Many lectures on a variety of topics, as well as courses in the Guest Card Program are open to the public. The university confers honorary doctorates on outstanding individuals from Germany and abroad: these include the Nobel Prize winners in Literature, Orhan Pamuk and Imre Kertész as well as the author Salman Rushdie. Freie Universität has several visiting professorships for appointing acclaimed national and international writers to teach for a semester. Generally, they hold an inaugural lecture that is open to the public.
DEPARTMENTS

- Biology, Chemistry, Pharmacy
- Business and Economics
- Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, the medical school jointly operated by Freie Universität and Humboldt-Universität
- Earth Sciences
- Education and Psychology
- History and Cultural Sciences
- Law
- Mathematics and Computer Science
- Philosophy and Humanities
- Physics
- Political and Social Sciences
- Veterinary Medicine

CENTRAL INSTITUTES

- Dahlem School of Education
- Institute for Eastern European Studies
- Institute for Latin American Studies
- John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies