

FU-BEST Program

Academic Regulations and Code of Conduct

I. Academic Regulations

The FU-BEST Program is an official program of Freie Universität Berlin, which has entrusted ERG Universitätsservice GmbH with the task of carrying out the organization and management of FU-BEST.

The program is therefore subject to (academic) regulations as set forth below, posted on the FU-BEST website, and otherwise promulgated by Freie Universität Berlin. Any incompatibility with regulations of a participant's home institution is discussed and cleared in direct communication between ERG Universitätsservice GmbH and relevant officials of the home institution, whereby FU-BEST and Freie Universität regulations will generally take precedence.

In order that students attending the FU-BEST program may earn credit toward their degrees through their home institutions, an Academic Board at Freie Universität Berlin reviews and approves all FU-BEST course offerings. The Academic Board consists of five tenured university professors from various disciplines. The Academic Board has established the following academic rules and regulations for the FU-BEST program and its courses.

1. Admission prerequisites

The FU-BEST program is intended for students at 4-year universities and colleges who are in the process of completing their B.A./B.S. degree. Applicants to the FU-BEST program should be at least 18 years old, have reached the equivalent of second-semester sophomore status in college or university, have a very good command of English in order to complete a rigorous academic program in that language, be committed to participation in our intensive German language component, and have a GPA of at least 3.0. Students whose GPA is below 3.0 are welcome to apply, but cannot be guaranteed admission to the program until their overall qualifications are more closely reviewed. Students whose native language is not English should note that the program is aimed primarily at students with fluency or at least a high level of proficiency in English. Non-native speakers may be requested to submit English test scores along with their application. For TOEFL, the score should be minimally 100. In the case of IELTS, the overall score must be at least 6.5 and the scores on individual parts must be no lower than 6.0.

FU-BEST participants are in principle admitted on a semester-by-semester basis. Participation in two semesters (i.e., a full academic year) is possible, provided that a participant is still able to enroll in sufficient German language credits as offered and required by the program. Students who have completed the Advanced 1 level of German language by the end of their first semester cannot stay on for a second semester. Any participant's German language placement and classification are regulated by FU-BEST placement procedures only.

Admission will not be denied on the basis of race, ethnic or national origin, creed, gender/sex, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation/identity.

2. Program start, arrival, and departure

Students are expected to make their travel arrangements so as to arrive and depart on the designated arrival and departure dates. Students who are not present for the orientation, the placement interviews, or the first day of instruction may be denied participation in the program. Moving-in and moving-out dates for accom-

modation arranged by FU-BEST are the designated arrival and departure dates. Students who arrive earlier or leave later will need to arrange for their own accommodation during those times.

3. Course enrollment

Enrollment in courses, based on the preference-ranking marked on the application form, is carried out on a “rolling basis,” that is, based on chronological receipt of the application. This chronological sequence is also considered when attempting to add a course with limited open spaces after the semester has begun. The program features two types of courses: German language and subject courses.

4. Language of instruction

Unless specifically set up otherwise, FU-BEST subject courses are taught in English. Students with sufficient German language proficiency, as determined by FU-BEST teaching staff, may opt to do some readings or other course work such as papers or exams in German; the issue should be raised early during the semester. The program also features a special academic module entitled German *PLUS+*, consisting of German-taught subject courses and high-level German language classes and open to participants with German language proficiency at the Advanced level.

5. Grading system

FU-BEST uses the grading system of Freie Universität Berlin, featuring numerical grades. Please see the table below for comparison with the U.S. equivalents as far as grades are concerned. The program itself does not award Pass/Fail grades; students interested in this type of grade should make appropriate arrangements with their own home institutions. FU-BEST transcripts (produced in English) contain only German/Freie Universität grades. Participants have a right to proper feedback regarding any grade received on an assignment or test. In view of the overseas nature of the program, a grade of “incomplete,” with course work to be handed in later, will only rarely be feasible and is therefore not routinely available.

GRADING TABLE

Please note: the grades of 1,1, 1,2, 1,4, 1,5, 1,6, 1,8, 1,9, 2,1, 2,2 etc. are not given.

FU Grade	Points on 100-Scale	U.S. Grade
1,0	98-100	A
1,3	95-97	A
1,7	90-94	A-
2,0	85-89	B+
2,3	80-84	B
2,7	75-79	B-
3,0	70-74	C+
3,3	65-69	C
3,7	60-64	C-
4,0	50-59	D
5,0	< 50	F

6. Drop/Add and Withdrawal

Drop/Add requests may (only) be submitted on publicly posted course lists during the first week of classes, following procedures clearly announced at the start of the semester. Adding a course is only possible if space in the desired course is available. Results of drop/add requests are announced by public posting of revised course lists at the start of the second week of classes. Until the Thursday evening of the second week of classes, a course may be dropped without any notice on the final transcript, but only by sending the request to drop by e-mail to the Academic Directors (fubest@fu-berlin.de). Late requests to add a course, based on legitimate

considerations, may be made after publication of the course lists at the start of the second week of classes, if space in a desired course is still available. Such requests will be considered only if submitted by e-mail no later than the Wednesday evening of the second week of classes. After the second week of classes, a student may still withdraw from a course but will receive a “W” on the transcript. After the final exam has been taken, withdrawal is no longer possible and an actual course grade will be recorded on the transcript.

7. Transcript and credit transfer

FU-BEST will issue a Freie Universität Berlin transcript for each participant. The transcript lists all courses taken, the number of contact hours, the ECTS credits earned, and the final grade. Please note that credits can only be awarded if a participant successfully completes a FU-BEST course and is currently or has been enrolled at a university or college. Academic work arranged and supervised by any program or institution other than FU-BEST or the Freie Universität Berlin will not appear on the transcript. FU-BEST issues the transcripts approximately four weeks after the end of the program. The transcript will be sent to the student’s home institution or study abroad provider, whichever is applicable; each student will receive a personal electronic grade report. It is the student’s responsibility to provide FU-BEST with a correct mailing address for the official transcript. Students should bear in mind that overseas mail delivery may take two weeks or longer.

Because each institution has its own policy regarding credit transfer from other institutions, FU-BEST strongly recommends that students consult with the appropriate advisor(s) and professor(s) in order to receive credit transfer approval prior to enrolling in the FU-BEST program.

8. Credit calculation

FU-BEST awards ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits. ECTS is based on the principle that the workload of a full-time student during one academic year is equivalent to 60 credits. This includes in-class contact hours as well as individual work on assignments and class preparation. On average, the student workload of a full-time study program in Europe is between 1,500 and 1,800 hours per year; thus, one ECTS credit represents between 25 and 30 hours of work. The Academic Senate of the Freie Universität Berlin has stipulated that one ECTS credit is equivalent to 30 hours of study.

9. Attendance

Attendance in class and at any officially scheduled course-related activity is mandatory, both in German language courses and in subject courses. Punctuality is expected, also out of respect to both teachers and fellow students. Absence due to illness or another legitimate reason must be reported to the FU-BEST office (by phone or e-mail – fubest@fu-berlin.de) and to the teacher in question (by e-mail). Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are not accepted as reasons for absence.

Absences are self-excused in case of illness; however, for the third sick day and every other sick day after that (consecutive or cumulative), the student is required to turn in a doctor’s notice (“Attest” in German) to the FU-BEST office. Students are entitled to make up exams missed due to illness, subject to arrangement by the instructor.

Excused absences may nonetheless impact the grades if the student does not fulfill all course requirements. In this case, an agreeable solution will be found in close consultation with the Academic Directors. For subject courses, however, it should be noted that once a student misses more than half of a course’s sessions and/or fails to complete more than one of the standard, main course requirements (Midterm Exam, Term-Paper, Final Exam) due to excused absence, a course grade, even on the basis of an incomplete, is no longer possible.

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following basic rules: In *subject courses*, any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation subgrade, if not for the course grade as a whole; two unexcused absences lead to a formal warning and a lowering of the course grade by a fraction. Three or more clearly unexcused absences will result in dismissal from the course and an “F” (5.0) on the transcript. For *German language classes*, the rule is as follows: More than two unexcused absences will result in the lowering of

the final grade by a full grade-point, 4 (Experiential) or 5 (Intensive) unexcused absences will lead to an “F” on the transcript. In German and subject courses alike, absence for more than half of a particular day’s session will be considered as “absence” for that day. Please also see your German level general semester syllabus.

The FU-BEST program does not allow participation in its courses on an Auditing basis.

10. Course requirements/assignments

Completion of all established and announced course requirements is needed for a grade, unless unusual circumstances lead to a rare exception to this rule. Each subject course features a midterm and final exam and a term-paper assignment; all three must be completed in order to receive a course grade at all. The same applies to the Independent Project report due in each subject course. Weighting of the different course requirements/components is the prerogative of each teacher and laid down in each course syllabus. Study questions may be distributed by teachers prior to an exam, but they are not an obligatory element in FU-BEST instruction. FU-BEST teachers discuss course requirements and grading standards at the start of the semester and note them in their course syllabus; requests for clarification should be made at that time.

11. Extensions

Late papers are not accepted, unless a specific extension has been explicitly granted by the teacher. Each day of lateness with a paper results in a reduction of one full grade-point off the grade. Papers that end up at an F (5.0) as a result of this must nonetheless be turned in in order to receive a course grade at all.

12. Academic dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is a severe offense that is incompatible with the academic standards and self-understanding of Freie Universität Berlin. Therefore, FU-BEST students pledge not to engage in academic dishonesty, plagiarism, cheating, the use of unauthorized materials, or accessing or distributing confidential academic materials.

If a student appears to have broken this pledge, he or she will be notified, usually within two working days, that there has been an academic dishonesty charge filed against him or her. He or she will also be notified when and where the review of the charge will take place. The Academic Directors and one faculty member who is not involved in the specific case will conduct the review. During the hearing the student will be presented with all details of the charge filed against him or her and be asked to present his or her case. If the student admits to the charge, the circumstances of the violation will be discussed and an appropriate sanction will be determined. If the student denies any wrongdoing, the review committee will consider all existing information, gather more data if necessary, and make a decision. The student will be notified within two working days of this final decision.

Sanctions for academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to) the following: warning, grade penalty, notification of the home university, suspension, dismissal from the program, or any combination of the above. If possible dismissal is involved, the matter is first submitted to the Dean of International Affairs at Freie Universität Berlin for final review and determination.

13. Course grade appeals

Students who wish formally to appeal a course grade must submit a petition in writing to the Academic Directors no later than February 1 after a Fall Semester or June 1 after a Spring Semester. The Directors will give a copy of the appeal to the instructor involved and discuss with him or her the particulars of the case. The course instructor is the primary authority in grading matters. The Academic Directors, however, retain a certain discretionary power which will be exercised only in the most extraordinary circumstances.

14. Credit calculation and extracurricular activities

In order to receive the appropriate number of ECTS credits and accumulate the mandatory 45 contact hours per subject course, and in the framework of the program's "extended classroom" concept, participation in the week-long excursion, the completion of one so-called Independent Project per subject course as well as the participation in at least one of three Friday field-trips are required of each participant. The Independent Project is assigned by each individual instructor. Each participant is personally responsible to check in with the Student Assistant(s) in order to have their attendance at a Friday field-trip confirmed. At the end of the semester, non-participation in one of the Friday field-trips results in a loss of a full grade point in the participation/attendance portion of a student's grade in all subject courses in which he/she is enrolled.

15. Classroom etiquette

The use of laptop computers during class sessions is not permitted, unless explicitly sanctioned by a course's teacher. Eating is not acceptable during class at any time, but non-alcoholic beverages are permitted. Trash is to be disposed of in the available trash cans. Mugs/cups and other personal items must be removed after a class session ends (unless a student has an additional course immediately following). Classroom equipment may not be used by program participants without supervision by teaching staff. Students and teachers are committed to treating one another with courtesy and respect. When problems arise, students and teachers should seek the assistance of the FU-BEST staff.

16. Learning difficulties and physical disabilities

Students with identified learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities should inform the Academic Directors in writing and be prepared to provide official documentation prior to the beginning of the program. FU-BEST can take appropriate measures and accommodate a student's special needs only if the Academic Directors have been informed of a student's identified learning difficulty, and/or physical disability.

17. Information Technology

Freie Universität Berlin maintains computer labs in order to support teaching and learning. Students who use these facilities enter a contract to use them legally, ethically, and in accordance with their educational purposes. Computer facilities owned by Freie Universität Berlin (including the campus network and internet connection), whether accessed remotely or locally, should not be used for commercial purposes or in any way that infringes on state/federal/international laws regarding libel or copyright. The illegal download and storage of music and movies on Freie Universität Berlin servers and computers as well as the use of tools to access peer-to-peer networks is strictly prohibited.

II. Code of Conduct

Students violating the following code will be subject to appropriate review and sanctions, up to and including expulsion from the program. Information regarding students who violate FU-BEST policies will be provided to the students' home institutions and may be provided to their parents.

This student code of conduct applies in conjunction with any other (home) university/college rules of conduct that may be applicable as well as with German criminal law.

The following behavior and/or actions are illegal in Germany, will be reported to local police officials, and will be prosecuted under German law:

- Theft and robbery
- Violence against others
- Vandalism

- Sexual harassment
- Stalking
- Possession and abuse of illegal drugs
- Possession of illegal substances and explosive materials
- Possession of weapons without proper permission

(Please note that this represents only a partial list.)

In addition, intolerant, disrespectful, disruptive or otherwise irresponsible behavior as well as actions detrimental to the safety and well-being of students, instructors, and staff and/or the reputation of the program and Freie Universität Berlin are prohibited. Such actions include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal abuse of faculty, staff, students, and/or FU-BEST representatives
- Behavior that is noticeably disturbing or distressing to students, staff, or faculty
- Sexual harassment, disorderly, lewd, indecent or obscene gestures or actions
- Harassment of any person
- Stalking of any person
- Disturbance of classes and/or other FU-BEST activities
- Damage to the property of Freie Universität Berlin, FU-BEST, host-families, apartments or facilities used/visited during field-trips and excursions
- Violations of residential guidelines and/or rules, including, but not limited to, unauthorized overnight guests, excessive noise, rowdy conduct, and public drunkenness
- Permanent or temporary diversion of academic materials needed by other students, including unauthorized removal of library materials, audio-visual materials, technical equipment or other program supplies
- Self-endangerment, including involvement in activities or behavior that could result in personal harm
- Excessive alcohol abuse

(Please note that this represents only a partial list.)

If a student appears to have violated this code, he or she will be notified that there has been a charge filed against him or her. He or she will also be notified when and where the review of the charge will take place. Depending on the gravity of the violation, a formal warning may be issued first or an actual violation review session may be immediately scheduled.

The Academic Directors, one additional FU-BEST staff member, and one FU-BEST faculty member will conduct the review. At the review hearing the student will be presented with all details of the charge filed against him or her and be asked to present his or her case. The student may present other pertinent information, including written statements from witnesses.

If the student admits to the charge, the circumstances of the violation will be discussed and an appropriate sanction will be determined.

If the student denies any wrongdoing, the review committee will consider all existing information, gather more data if necessary, and make a decision. The student will be notified within two working days of this final decision. Depending on the gravity of the situation, the Dean of International Affairs at Freie Universität Berlin may be asked to weigh in as well. Any decision involving dismissal from the program will always be reviewed by the Dean's Office first.

Sanctions for violation of this code of conduct include (but are not limited to) the following: warning, grade penalty, notification of the home university/college, suspension, dismissal from the program, or any combination of the above.

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