

Do I need a visa?

- Your home country (e.g. Ukraine, India, China etc.) may not participate in the visa waiver program. Please contact the German embassy or consulate in the country where you study or check the following website: [Overview of visa requirements/exemptions for entry into the Federal Republic of Germany](#)
- Even if you are allowed to enter Germany without an entry visa, the intent of staying longer than the customary 90 days **requires** you to have a student visa so you can apply for an extended residence permit on-site (footnote (3) on the website above).

Depending on where you come from, you may need an entry visa for Germany. Even if you have travelled to Germany or other European countries before without a visa, your extended stay may require you to have one so you can apply for a residence permit in Berlin. A tourist visa **cannot** be converted to a student visa!



What do I have to know before I apply for a visa?

- Visit the website of the German Federal Foreign Office for the latest visa requirements for all countries: [Visa requirements](#)
- Make sure your passport is valid for your entire stay.
- Start now.

The application process

- Submit your application as early as possible **in the country where you study** (not your home country!). Visa processing can take several weeks or even up to two months.
- You have to apply for a “Residence Visa” (this term might be subject to change; do **NOT** apply for a “Schengen Visa”). You can download the application form from the [Federal Foreign Office’s website](#). Here you must choose “Studium/Study” as your purpose of stay.
- Student visa (“Visum zu Studienzwecken”) are usually valid for three months. Within these 90 days, you will have to apply for an extended residence permit in Berlin. If you are planning on arriving within three weeks before the official start of the program, FU-BEST will handle the application of the extended residence permit on your behalf.
- After you have secured an appointment with a German mission in the country where you study (e.g. via [www.germany.info](#) for the US), you will have to obtain a list of required documents from their website. You are usually asked to provide:
 - the FU-BEST admission letter,
 - supporting statement from your home school (including information on their payment of the FU-BEST Program and Tuition Fee on your behalf as well as the total amount, if applicable),
 - proof of international health insurance, and
 - proof of financial resources (at least 992 EUR/month).
- If, during your personal appointment at the German embassy/consulate, the official asks to see proof of German language proficiency, it is important to reiterate that you are not seeking a degree in Germany but that you are participating in a specific program that is limited to one or two semesters.

Specifics about the proof of financial resources

- There are several ways to prove that you are able to financially support yourself but it is up to the embassy/consulate to decide which one they accept. Contact them well in advance and find out what they prefer. In the past, most international students studying in the US had to provide a so-called “Sperrkonto”, or blocked account, which can only be accessed from Germany. Again, at this point you should reiterate that you are participating in a specific semester-long program and are not seeking a degree. This will most likely affect the sum you have to store in the blocked account or completely prevent the requirement of having one.
- If the embassy/consulate still requires a blocked account, you will have to apply for it **BEFORE** your visa appointment. You will then have to bring the bank’s documents to your appointment at the embassy/consulate for them to get certified. For this process, the German missions accept several internet-based services, with [Expatrio](#) being the most popular one (others include [Fintiba](#) or [Coracle](#)). Since you can’t directly withdraw money from the blocked account, all services require you to open a German bank account once on-site. The service will then transfer a monthly sum from your blocked account to your new bank account. Some of the services will also assist you in opening the German bank account.

Please keep the FU-BEST office and/or your study abroad advisor updated about the status of your visa application!