



Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin
University of Applied Sciences

Master of Arts

Intercultural Conflict Management

(MA-ICM)

Master of Arts

Social Work as a Human Rights Profession

(MA-SWHR)

Starter's Guide

Moving to Berlin as an international student

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Starter's Guide

Moving to Berlin as an international student

Contents

Overview	3
1. Visa	5
Before moving to Germany	5
After moving to Germany	6
2. Health insurance.....	6
Before moving to Germany	6
After moving to Germany	6
3. Finances	7
Before moving to Germany – fees for the programs	7
After moving to Germany – opening a bank account.....	8
Living costs	8
4. Housing	9
Before moving to Germany/Berlin	9
After moving to Germany/Berlin	9
5. Everyday student life in Berlin	10
Public transport	10
Services for students at ASH Berlin.....	10
6. Checklist: Documents to bring	11
7. Further information.....	13

Overview

For MA-ICM and MA-SWHR students, the most important processes to take care of when moving to Germany can be grouped into four topics: Visa, Health insurance, Finances, and Housing.

To assist you with all this, the MA-ICM and MA-SWHR Teams will conduct **Introduction Days** before the official start of the classes. As you are obliged to register with public authorities during the first week after your arrival, **we strongly recommend that you attend these Introduction Days and participate in our Q&A sessions**, where we will provide support and information on the following administrative steps.

For many international students, the opportunity to stay and study in Germany depends on a successful visa application. Therefore, visas are the first topic covered in this starter's guide. As shown in the following table, some of the processes are interrelated; for example, you will need proof of health insurance to receive a visa. Keeping track of all these bureaucratic processes can sometimes feel quite overwhelming. This starter's guide aims to provide you with an overview of the necessary steps to ensure your move to Berlin is as smooth as possible.

VISA	HEALTH INSURANCE	FINANCES	HOUSING
Before moving to Germany			
Make an appointment at your respective Embassy.		Make sure you follow the ICM/SWHR fee guidelines.	We recommend you start looking for housing as early as possible (see housing document).
Gather all necessary documents, including: • Proof of health insurance • Proof of financial means • Proof of accommodation	Proof of health insurance is needed for the visa application .	Proof of funds is needed for the visa application .	Proof of housing is needed for the visa application .
Go to the appointment with your documents.			
Wait for the approval of your visa			

application.			
Receive a temporary visa, which can be used to enter Germany and start your studies			
Move to Germany			

After arrival in Germany			
			Register your address at the city administration (Anmeldung). This is needed for the bank account, health insurance, and visa/residence permit.
		Open a bank account at a German bank. This is needed for the health insurance.	
	Take out health insurance for the entire duration of your stay. This is needed for the matriculation and visa.		
Convert your temporary visa to a student residence permit at the Berlin immigration office. To do this, you will require: • A registered address • Health insurance proof for your entire stay • Matriculation certificate from the university			

Please take care of all essential formalities before traveling. If possible, arrive a couple of weeks before the semester begins to allow yourself enough time to move into your new place and prepare for your studies. Due to the tight housing market in Berlin, we recommend scheduling plenty of time to look for accommodation (at least one to two months before arrival).

1. Visa

Before moving to Germany

The following is only a general overview. Please read our **Visa Guide** carefully and contact a German embassy or consulate in your home country regarding any current entry and residence requirements as soon as possible! Since entry requirements differ from country to country and may change yearly, we cannot provide fail-safe information on what type of visa you need. Generally, prospective international students require a student visa for Germany. Exceptions include citizens from EU countries, EEC countries, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and the USA, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand. These individuals do not require a visa to enter Germany, but non-EU citizens must apply for a student residence permit at the Immigration Office after arriving in Berlin.

EU citizens	Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand citizens	All other international students
You do not need a visa to enter or study in Germany.	No visa is needed to enter Germany, but one must apply for a student residence permit after arriving.	You must apply for a student visa before traveling to Germany.

Applying for a visa should be done well in advance, as it typically takes several weeks or even months to process. Ensure that the visa you apply for permits studying in Germany, as other types, like a tourist visa, won't qualify you for a student residence permit. Consequently, if you choose the wrong visa, you won't be able to enroll and will have to return to your home country. After you transfer the

administration fee or total tuition to the specified ASH bank account, our university will provide you with all the necessary documents needed to apply for your student visa at your local German embassy. Please also review the [checklist of documents to bring under Point 4 in this document!](#) You can visit [this website](#) or contact the nearest German embassy directly for detailed information on the visa application process.

After moving to Germany

After moving to Germany, all non-EU citizens must apply for a student residence permit at the immigration office. To do this, you will need various documents, a list of which can be found in the table on the last page of this guide. As part of the Introduction Days, you will receive additional information and support for the necessary registration processes during individual Q&A sessions.

2. Health insurance

Before moving to Germany

Before moving to Germany, visa candidates generally need travel insurance covering their stay's first three months. This is a requirement to obtain a visa that allows entry into the country and commencement of studies. After arriving in Berlin, you must switch to a two-year health insurance plan with either a German public or private health insurance provider. **A medical insurance covering the entire duration of your stay is required for matriculation at a German university.** For non-EU citizens who do not need a visa to enter Germany, travel insurance covering the first few weeks of their stay is also advisable.

EU citizens typically do not require a new health insurance plan, as they can use their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in Germany. This also applies to non-EU countries with social security agreements with Germany, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Turkey, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and Tunisia. Important: For those of you who already have German public health insurance other than TK, your health insurance provider needs the **"Betriebsnummer"** (institutional number) to send us the electronic notification for your enrollment. **The number is H0001343.**

After moving to Germany

Comprehensive medical insurance is mandatory for your entire stay to enroll in a German university and to obtain a residence permit. After you pay your first installment, the MA-ICM/MA-SWHR Program

will provide you with detailed guidance on health insurance and the process to secure it.

Case 1:

International students who have proof of insurance from a country with social security agreements with Germany (EU countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Turkey, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Tunisia, etc.) and possess a valid certificate from their foreign insurance company may register with a German health insurance company of their choice to have their existing insurance recognized.

Case 2:

International students with private medical insurance from their home country can either obtain compulsory insurance from a health insurance company of their choice or apply for proof of exemption.

Case 3:

International students who lack private medical insurance in their home country and whose country does not have a social security agreement with Germany must obtain insurance from one of the German health insurance companies. Currently, the monthly fee is approximately 140 euros for students younger than 30 or with children, and approximately 200 euros for those over 30 without children. However, health insurance rates can change annually. As part of the Introduction Days, you will receive further information about the costs from the health insurance companies to help you choose the best option for your circumstances. The MA-SWHR/MA-ICM is cooperating with one of the largest German health insurance companies – “Techniker Krankenkasse” or “TK” for short – to provide you with the best service. In the introductory weeks, you will have the opportunity to obtain health insurance with TK. Find out more about TK [HERE](#).

If you are over 30 years old or have pre-existing medical conditions, consider contacting [Feather](#), a private health insurance company, to explore the different private health insurance plans offered in Germany. Please take some time to research your options prior to your move to Germany.

3. Finances

Before moving to Germany – fees for the programs

Please carefully read and adhere to the ICM/SWHR fee guidelines. If you face any unexpected financial challenges, contact the ICM/SWHR program office promptly to discuss your payment options and potential solutions. Additionally, remember that we can only issue official documents for a student visa application at a German Embassy or Consulate after receiving the registration fee of 300 euros. The sooner you pay,

the faster we can provide all necessary documents for your visa application.

For visa candidates:

Please remember that you must present proof of financing to the German embassy, in addition to the funds needed for the ICM/SWHR tuition fees. Germany's Immigration Office expects visiting students to have around 992 euros per month (**11,904 euros a year**) to cover the living costs. Depending on your nationality, the full amount for your stay in Germany must be deposited in a separate blocked bank account BEFORE a visa can be issued!

After moving to Germany – opening a bank account

After you arrive in Germany, it is advised that you open a current account at a German bank. With a current account, you can:

- Withdraw money from your bank using a debit card;
- Transfer money to other bank accounts for payment of bills, using transfer forms (on paper or online);
- Have payments which recur regularly and are for a fixed amount (e.g., for your rent) paid by automatic bill payment/banker's order ("Dauerauftrag");
- Have regular payments (even of variable amounts, e.g., telephone bills and health insurance contributions) deducted from your account by direct debit ("Einzugsermächtigung"). The direct debit forms ("Lastschrifteneinzug") are often attached to the first bill.

Although most credit cards used worldwide are Visa and Mastercard, some places in Berlin, such as supermarkets or the railway service machines, do not necessarily accept payments with them. Debit cards are accepted in these cases. We strongly recommend that you use and carry a debit card with you.

Living costs

Living costs depend on your personal requirements and habits - the living standard in Germany is generally high. However, in Berlin, some expenses like street food are still cheaper than other big cities in Germany and Europe. **Altogether, you should count on spending 1,000 to 1,300 euros per month, including rent and 35 euros per month for the public transport ticket (mandatory**

and paid for the whole semester, six months, upfront). Rent varies from 500 to 900 euros, depending on whether you are sharing a flat and in which area of Berlin you want to stay. There might be an extra charge for gas and electricity, which is about 40-60 euros a month. You also have to pay for your health insurance. Approximately 200 euros should be budgeted for meals, 100 for 150 EUR – depending on your lifestyle - for spending money on cultural activities, going out, etc. Internet and phone services can cost around 30€ per month. In Berlin, a great variety of cuisines can be found. The ASH also has a cafeteria (Mensa) with great student prices and serving all kinds of dishes, including vegetarian and vegan options.

4. Housing

Before moving to Germany/Berlin

As mentioned earlier, the housing market in Berlin is very tight, so we recommend starting your search for private accommodation as soon as possible, ideally at least 1 to 3 months before your arrival! Supply and demand, especially in cities with a large student population, vary considerably throughout the year. At the beginning of a term, such as in March/ April or September/ October, there is always a high demand for accommodation.

In Germany, campus universities are quite uncommon. There are no dormitories inside the ASH nor any dorms specifically reserved for ASH students. Therefore, we regret to inform you that we cannot offer any accommodation through the University. As an enrolled student, you can, however, apply for a place in various student residence halls throughout Berlin.

We recommend that you apply for [student housing through Berlin's student union 'StudierendenWERK' Berlin](#). Please note that the Housing Letter provided by ICM/SWHR is simply a document intended to assist you with the visa application process and does not guarantee that you will be accommodated in a student residence hall. You still need to apply for student housing on your own. Living in a shared apartment is the most common type of accommodation for students in Berlin. Although it can be challenging to find a (shared) apartment from abroad, we recommend actively searching some of the databases and reaching out to any contacts you may have in Berlin. Please consult our Housing Guide for advice on how to find accommodation.

After moving to Germany/Berlin

After arriving in Berlin, you need to register your address and identity with the city administration. The residence certificate you receive upon registration will be used for various purposes, from opening a bank account to officially enrolling in the university or obtaining a student residence

permit. Therefore, finding accommodation where you can be registered as a long-term resident is very important. If all else fails, you can register at a friend's or family member's address. Some hostels also allow you to register at their address if you stay there for a specific number of weeks. You can search for hostels and apartments on popular websites like [booking.com](https://www.booking.com), [Airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com) and [trivago.com](https://www.trivago.com).

5. Everyday student life in Berlin

Public transport

Germany has a well-developed public transport network. When you are a registered student at Alice Salomon University for Applied Sciences (ASH), you will receive the semester ticket for public transport ("Deutschlandsemesterticket") for a fee of 208.80 euros per semester. This ticket is mandatory for all students and is valid for the entire semester (six months) throughout Germany, as long as you travel using regional transportation methods (S-Bahn, Tram (Straßenbahn), Regionalexpress (RB/RE), U-Bahn (Subway), bus, etc.). Intercity-Express Trains (IC/ICE) cannot be used with the semester ticket.

Services for students at ASH Berlin

A variety of services are offered, including:

- Computer facilities with free internet access.
- Free in-house printing for approximately 250 black and white pages or 75 colored pages per semester.
- Media workshops/Media room, Music Room and Theater room with various equipment available for exams, group projects, and research.
- An in-house library with physical books, online e-books, and magazines available for students to borrow.
- Language courses, including free German language courses.
- Many different regular events for international students organized by the StudierendenWERK Berlin (Student union Berlin), the International Office, or the International Newcomers Team at ASH Berlin.
- Various counseling and support services offered by Studierendenwerk Berlin for students facing challenges with academic writing, financing their studies, discrimination, organizing their studies, chronic illnesses, and mental health issues, etc.

6. Checklist: Documents to bring

Registration	Details	You will receive	Documents to bring/upload
City Registration („Anmeldung“)	Registration of your residence, address, and identity with city administration	Residence certificate („Meldebescheinigung“)	• Passport + Color copy • filled-out city registration form („Anmeldung“) • Landlord confirmation form („Wohnungsgeberbestätigung“)
Bank Account („Kontoeröffnung“)	The same applies to blocked accounts (students with visa)	Bank account	• Passport (copy) • Residence certificate („Meldebescheinigung“) • If applicable: Tax-ID
Health Insurance („Krankenkasse“)	Registration for a health insurance plan	Health insurance plan (private or public)	• Passport (copy) • Residence certificate („Meldebescheinigung“) • Bank account (provided by your bank institute) • ASH's matriculation number (8 digits)
Enrolment („Einschreibung“ / „Immatrikulation“)	Registration at the University	Campuscard, Student Contract <i>(only if you have submitted the original copies already!)</i>	• Proof of health insurance: electronic notification by public health insurance provider directly to ASH Berlin • Certified Copy of Undergraduate Degree / Certificate • Original Student Contracts (both hardcopies, signed) • Exmatriculation certificate (only if you have studied at a German university before)

Registration for a student VISA (“Landesamt für Einwanderung”) (Process is done via online form on the website of the immigration office)	Registration in Germany as a Foreigner (non-EU)	Residence permit (“Aufenthaltstitel”)	• Proof of health Insurance (valid for the whole length of your studies + additional 3 months recommended) • Valid passport for the entire duration of your study • German biometric passport photo • Proof of enrolment (via course schedule LSF) (“Immatrikulationsbescheinigung”) • Residence certificate (“Meldebescheinigung”) issued by the “Einwohnermeldebehörde” • Proof of financial ability/support: ○ Proof of scholarship + translation in GERMAN or ENGLISH OR: ○ Proof of blocked account (11,208 euros) OR: ○ Declaration of Obligation (“Verpflichtserklärung”) OR: ○ Notarized declaration from private sponsor (parents or other) + support letter + color copy of sponsor’s passport and bank statements of the last six months (currency has to be converted into euros) • Procession fee (Paypal/Credit Card) First time registration fee: 100 euros Turkey / Switzerland: 28.80 euros Scholarship-holders: Free of charge if from an EU Organization
All important information on the registration process for a student visa can be found on the website of the immigration office. The process is done online.			
All copies have to be printed on single paper sheets in A4 format (no US Letter, no double-sided prints, no bounded documents, etc.			

7. Further information

For further information, please read the MA-ICM / MA-SWHR Guides on the following topics:

- Visa Guide
- Housing Information
- Fee Guideline
- Health Insurance Guide
- Scholarship Information

You will also soon have access to the online learning platform Moodle, where you will find a Moodle course about the Introduction Days and Q&A sessions with more helpful information and resources!

Please carefully read the information available on the respective program websites: And ash-berlin.eu/icm.