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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

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Overview

For MA-ICM and MA-SWHR students, the most important processes to handle 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 as soon as possible after your arrival, **we strongly recommend that you attend the Introduction Days and participate in our Q&A sessions**, where we will provide support and information on the next steps in the administrative process.

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 provides an overview of the 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 residence permit.
		Open a bank account at a German bank. This is needed for the health insurance.	
	You need a health insurance for the entire duration of your stay. This is needed for the enrollment 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 • Enrollment certificate from the university > If you applied for a visa abroad, you			

normally have a few months' time • Visa upon arrival: Proof of financial means <u>For concrete details, please check the Immigration's Office website (LEA Berlin).</u>			
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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 (See Housing section).

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 country of residence 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 specific information on what type of visa you need. Generally, prospective international students require a student visa to study in 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 (LEA Berlin) 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	You must apply for a student visa before

	must apply for a student residence permit after arriving. The tourist visa expires after 90 days.	traveling to Germany.
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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 study in Germany, as other types, such as 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, you can apply for a student visa at your local German embassy with the admission letter provided by the ASH. 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 is provided in the table on the last page of this guide. As part of the Introduction Days, you will receive additional information and support. We also offer separate Q&A sessions before the Introduction Days.

2. Health insurance

Before moving to Germany

Before moving to Germany, visa candidates generally need travel insurance covering the first three months of their stay. 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 enrollment 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 enrollment notification. **The number is H0001343.**

After moving to Germany

Comprehensive medical insurance is mandatory for your entire stay in Germany to enroll at a university and 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 - students under 30 years old:

International students must obtain insurance from a German health insurance company. Health insurance rates may change annually. 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 service. During the Introduction Days, TK will present its service, and you will have the opportunity to obtain health insurance through TK. Find out more about TK [HERE](#).

Case 3 - students over 30 years old:

Students over 30 years old must obtain private health insurance. Please take some time to research your options prior to your move to Germany. If you are over 30 years old, please contact a private health insurance company. Our students have mainly registered with Mawista, Feather or Hanse Merkur.

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 support documents for a student visa application at a German Embassy or Consulate after receiving the administration fee of 300 euros.

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 non-EU students to have 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! More information on the blocked account can be found [HERE](#).

After moving to Germany – opening a bank account

After you arrive in Germany, it is advised that you open an account at a German bank.

Previous students recommended the [Sparkasse Berlin](#), as they have a customer service center right across the ASH Berlin University [in Hellersdorf](#), where you can make an appointment directly. Many students also found online banks, such as N26, a good option.

With an 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 or carry a debit card or cash.

Living costs

Living costs depend on your personal requirements and habits - the living standard in Germany is generally high. However, in Berlin, some expenses, such as street food, are still cheaper than in other big cities in Germany and across Europe. **Altogether, you should budget 1,100 to 1,300 euros per month, including rent.** Students in Berlin must purchase a public transportation ticket with a student discount. This purchase is mandatory because the semester ticket is based on the principle of solidarity, meaning that all students pay a mandatory fee each semester, regardless of whether they use the ticket or not, and thus support each other. The fee may vary, and the students will be notified in advance. The deadline for the transfer of the semester ticket fee will be announced beforehand via email. The cost of the semester ticket is currently **EUR 226.80** and it 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). InterCityExpress Trains (IC/ICE) cannot be used with the semester ticket.

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

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 one to three 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 April or October, there is always high demand for accommodation.

In Germany, campus universities are quite uncommon. There are no dormitories at 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"](#). 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 databases and reaching out to any contacts you may have in Berlin. Please consult our Housing Guide for advice on how to find accommodation and ask your fellow students.

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 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](#), [Airbnb.com](#) and [trivago.com](#).

5. Everyday student life in Berlin



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 regular events for international students organized by the StudierendenWERK Berlin (Student Union Berlin) or by the International Office and the International Newcomers Team at ASH Berlin.

- Various counseling and support services are offered by ASH Berlin and the StudierendenWERK Berlin for students facing challenges with academic writing, financing their studies, discrimination, organizing their studies, chronic illnesses, and mental health issues, etc.
- Student discounts can be accessed with the student ID and/or ASH email address (e.g., for museums, Microsoft Office services, libraries, events, etc.)

...and more!

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“)	Website: https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/120686/ • Passport + Color copy • filled-out city registration form („Anmeldung“) (Document: Anmeldung der alleinigen Wohnung oder der Hauptwohnung) • Landlord confirmation form („Wohnungsgeberbestätigung“) (Document: Wohnungsgeberbestätigung (Einzugsbestätigung des Wohnungsgebers/Vermieters) (Muster))
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 number • ASH's matriculation number (8 digits)

Enrollment at ASH Berlin (<i>“Einschreibung” / “Immatrikulation”</i>)	In-person registration at the university	Campuscard, Student Contract (<i>Only if you have already submitted the original copies!</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 hard copies, signed)
Enrollment via the Online Portal	Online Registration in Portal	Campuscard, Student Contract (<i>Only if you have already submitted the original copies!</i>)	• Passport copy • Copy of the student contract • Exmatriculation Certificate (Exma), if you have studied at a German university before • Proof of payment
Registration for a student visa (<i>“Landesamt für Einwanderung”</i>) (Process is done via online form on the immigration’s office website)	Registration in Germany as an international student(non-EU)	Residence permit (<i>“Aufenthaltstitel”</i>)	• 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) (<i>“Immatrikulationsbescheinigung”</i>) • Residence certificate (<i>“Meldebescheinigung”</i>) issued by the <i>“Einwohnermeldebehörde”</i> • 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 (<i>“Verpflichtungserklärung”</i>) Before you can send the application, you need to pay the service fee.
All important information on the registration process for a student visa is provided on the website of the immigration office . The process is done online.			

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:

ash-berlin.eu/icm

ash-berlin.eu/swhr