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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)

## Moving to Berlin as an international student – 2024 Guide

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# Moving to Berlin as an international student – 2024 Guide

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## Overview

The most important processes you need to take care of when moving to Germany for the MA-ICM/MA-SWHR can be grouped into 4 topics: **Visa**, **Health Insurance**, **Finances** and **Housing**. For many international students, the possibility to stay and study in Germany hinges on a successful visa application. Therefore, **Visa** is the first topic covered in this starter's guide. As you can see in the following table, some of the processes are interrelated, for example you will need a proof of health insurance to receive a visa. Keeping track on all these bureaucratic processes can feel quite overwhelming at times. This starter's guide aims to give you an overview over the necessary steps to make your move to Berlin as smooth as possible.

VISA	HEALTH INSURANCE	FINANCES	HOUSING
<b>Before moving to Germany</b>			
make an appointment at your respective embassy		make sure you follow the ICM/SWHR fee guidelines	we recommend you start looking for housing <u>as early as possible</u> (see housing document)
gather all necessary documents, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• proof of health insurance</li> <li>• proof of financial means</li> <li>• proof of accommodation</li> </ul>	proof of health insurance is needed for <b>visa application</b>	proof of funds is needed for <b>visa application</b>	proof of housing is needed for <b>visa application</b>  → the document from ICM stating that you will be accommodated in student housing should be sufficient for this purpose
go to the appointment with all your documents			
wait for approval of your visa request			
receive a temporary visa which can be used to enter Germany and start your studies			
<b>Move to Germany</b>			

*Continuation on page 3 →*

VISA	HEALTH INSURANCE	FINANCES	HOUSING
<b>After arrival in Germany</b>			
			Register your address at the city administration (Anmeldung) → needed for bank account, health insurance, matriculation, visa
		Open a current account at a German bank → needed for health insurance	
	Take out health insurance for the entire duration of your stay  → needed for matriculation, visa		
Upgrade your temporary visa to a student residence permit at the Berlin immigration office; for this you will need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a registered address</li> <li>• proof of health insurance for the entire duration of your stay</li> <li>• matriculation certificate from the university</li> </ul>			

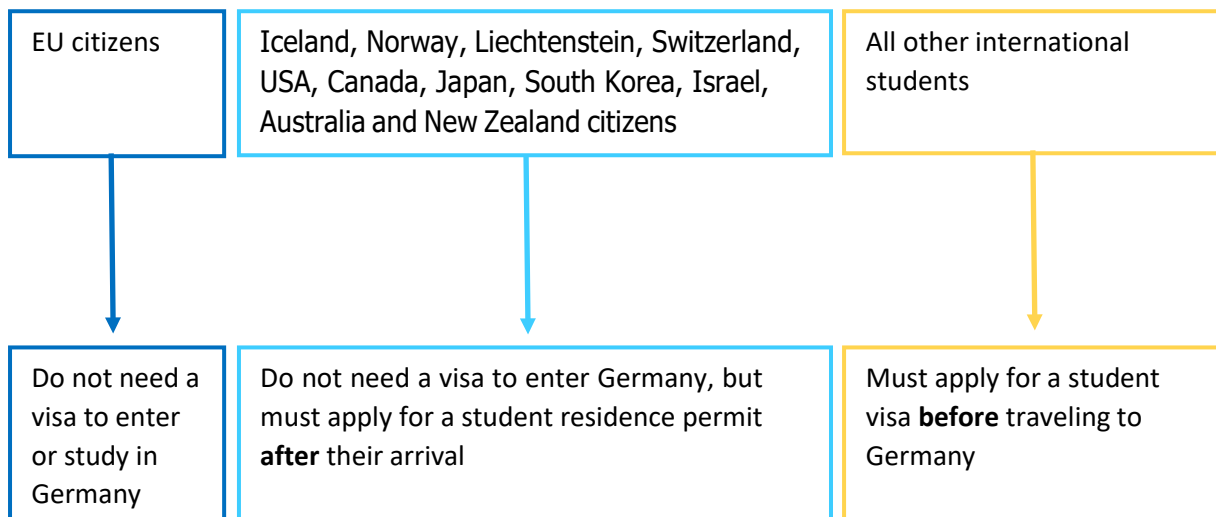
Please take care of all important formalities before traveling. If possible, arrive a couple of weeks before the beginning of the semester in order to allow yourself enough time to move into your new place and to prepare for your studies. Due to the tight housing market in Berlin, we recommend that you schedule plenty of time to look for accommodation (at least 1-2 months before arrival).

# 1. Visa

## Before moving to Germany

The following is only a general overview. **Please contact a German embassy or consulate in your home country regarding any current entry and residence requirements as soon as possible!** As entry requirements differ from country to country and may change from one year to the next, we cannot provide any fail-safe information on what type of visa you need.

Prospective international students generally require a **student visa for the Federal Republic of Germany**. **Exceptions** are citizens from EU countries, the EEC countries Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, from Switzerland, the USA, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Israel, Australia and New Zealand. They **do not** require a visa to enter Germany, but **non-EU citizens must apply for a student residence permit** at the Foreigner Registration Office after arriving in Berlin.



Usually, it takes several weeks or even months for a visa to be issued which therefore should be applied for in a **timely** manner.

**The visa must allow you to study in the Federal Republic of Germany.** Other visas (e.g., a tourist visa) **cannot** be used to obtain a student residence permit in Germany. As a result, the applicant would be unable to enroll and would be required to return to their home country.

You will receive all necessary documents required from our university to apply for the student visa at your local German embassy once the administration fee (or total tuition) has been transferred to the designated ASH bank account. Furthermore, MA-SWHR/MA-ICM Management can support you by getting in contact with the concerned embassy or consulate.

For detailed information on the visa application procedure, you can visit [www.nomadenberlin.com](http://www.nomadenberlin.com) or directly contact the German embassy nearest to you.

## After moving to Germany

After moving to Germany, **all non-EU citizens** must apply for a **student residence** permit at the immigration office. For this, you will need a number of documents, a list of which can be found in the table on the last page of this guide. You will receive further information and support for the necessary registration processes during the intro weeks in September.

## 2. Health Insurance

### Before moving to Germany

Before moving to Germany, **visa candidates** will generally need a **travel insurance** covering the first three months of their stay in Germany. This is a requirement to receive a visa allowing you to enter the country and start studying. You will then need to change to a 2-year health insurance plan with a German public or private health insurance after your arrival in Berlin.

For **non-EU citizens who do not need a visa** to enter Germany it is also advised to have the first few weeks of their stay covered by a travel insurance.

Depending on your case, it might be advantageous to immediately opt for an **expat health insurance** plan covering the two years of your stay. If you are in doubt, we recommend visiting <https://feather-insurance.com/>. They offer general information and individual advice on possible health insurance plans for internationals in Germany.

**EU citizens** usually do not need to get a new health insurance plan as they can use their **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)** in Germany. This is also the case for some non-EU countries which have social security agreements with Germany (such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Turkey, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Tunisia etc.).

### After moving to Germany

**A medical insurance for the entire duration of your stay is required for matriculation at a German university and for the issuance of a residence permit!** MA-ICM/MA-SWHR Program will send you detailed information about health insurance and how to obtain it after the payment of your first installment.

#### 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 who are therefore in possession of a valid certificate from their foreign insurance company, may register at German health insurance company of their choice, in order to have their existing insurance recognized.

### Case 2:

International students who have **private medical insurance in their home country** may obtain compulsory insurance at the health insurance company of their choice or apply for a proof of exemption.

### Case 3:

International students who **do not have private medical insurance** in their home country, which has **no social security agreement with Germany**, must obtain insurance at one of the German health insurance companies.

Currently the monthly fee adds up to around 120 EUR for students who are younger than 30 years or have children and around 180 EUR for those older than 30 years and without children, however, health insurance rates can change yearly. During the intro weeks, you will receive further information about the cost points of the health insurance companies, so that you can choose the best option for your life situation.

The MA-SWHR/MA-ICM is cooperating with one of the largest German health insurance companies – TK – in order to offer best service for you. In the introduction weeks you will have the possibility to obtain a health insurance with the TK at the above mentioned price (for students below an age of 30). For students older than 30 we will find a suitable private health insurance.

Again, we recommend visiting <https://feather-insurance.com/> to inform yourself about different health insurance plans in Germany. Especially students over 30 years of age and/or with pre-existing medical conditions may have difficulty finding a suitable health care plan. Please take some time before moving to Germany to gather information about your options.

## 3. Finances

### Before moving to Germany

#### ICM/SWHR fee guidelines

Please make sure to read and follow the ICM/SWHR fee guidelines carefully. In case you run into any expected or unexpected financial difficulties, please contact the ICM/SWHR program office as soon as possible to discuss your payment plan and find possible solutions to your individual situation.

Please note that we can only issue your official documents for a **student visa application** at a German Embassy or Consulate after we have received the **registration fee of EUR 300.00!** The earlier the payment is made, the earlier we can provide you with all necessary documents for your visa application.

## For visa candidates:

Please bear in mind that, in addition to the funds needed for the ICM/SWHR tuition fees, **you will have to present a proof of financing to the German embassy.** You can consult our visa info sheet or contact the German embassy directly for more information.

### After moving to Germany

#### Opening a bank account

After your arrival 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 an EC/ Maestro-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. your rent) paid by 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 respective direct debit forms ("Lastschrifteneinzug") are often attached to the first bill.

Although the majority of the credit cards used in the world are Visa and Mastercard, some places in Berlin, such as supermarkets or the railway service machines, do not accept payments with them. Maestro-cards are accepted in these cases. We strongly recommend you to use and carry a Maestro-card with you.

#### Living costs

Living costs depend on your personal requirements and habits - the living standard in Germany is generally high, but in Berlin some expenses like street food are still very cheap compared to other big cities in Germany and Europe. Altogether, you should count on spending 800 to 1.000 Euros per month, including rent. Rent varies from 400 up to 700 Euro, depending 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 40-50 Euro a month. You also have to pay about 110 EUR for the health insurance as well as approximately 10 EUR for liability insurance. About 150 EUR should be calculated for board, 100 to 150 EUR – depending on your lifestyle of course - for spending money for books, newspapers, going out etc. Internet and phone can cost about 40€ per month.

Regarding street food and beverages, prices range between 5-12 EUR, depending on the place and dish. 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, also vegetarian or vegan. However, due to the corona pandemic, the cafeteria currently offers limited services.

## 4. Housing

### Before moving to Germany/Berlin

As mentioned earlier, **the housing market in Berlin is very tight, so we recommend that you start looking for private accommodation as soon as you can, but at least 1 to 3 months before your arrival!** Supply and demand, particularly in cities with a large population of students, vary considerably in the course of the year. At the beginning of a term, i.e. in March/ April or September/ October, there is always a big demand for accommodation.

In Germany, campus universities are very uncommon. There are no dorms inside the ASH nor dorms reserved specifically for ASH students. Thus, unfortunately we cannot offer you any accommodation via the University. As an enrolled student you can, however, apply for a place in various student residence halls all over Berlin.

**We strongly recommend you to apply for student housing through Berlin's student union studierendenWERK:** <https://www.stw.berlin/wohnen/wohnheimbewerbung/>. Note that the Housing Letter provided by ICM/SWHR is just a document meant to help you in the visa application process and does not imply that you will automatically be accommodated in a student residence hall. You still need to apply for student housing independently.

Living in a shared apartment is the most common type of accommodation for students in Berlin. Although it can be tricky to find a (shared) apartment from abroad, we recommend you actively start searching some of the databases and get in touch with any contacts you may have in Berlin.

Please consult our "Housing Information" document for advice on how to find accommodation.

### After moving to Germany/Berlin

After your arrival in Berlin, you will need to **register** your address and identity at the city administration. The residence certificate you will receive upon registration will be used for a number of things, from **opening a bank account** to officially enrolling in the university or **receiving a student residence permit**. Therefore, it is very important that you find accommodation where you can register as a long-term resident. 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 certain number of weeks.

## Important papers and documents needed before entering Germany

- A **passport** or equivalent identity document valid for the whole duration of your stay in Germany;
- A **visa** for you and family members accompanying you. Please note that we can't issue visa documents for partners as well as children. You should apply for visas as soon as possible;
- Several **German biometric photographs** for the various documents you will require during your stay;
- **Birth certificate(s), marriage certificate**, if applicable, with German translation if possible;
- **Originals of your Bachelor's (or other academic degrees) certificates/** records which are needed for your enrolment;
- if applicable, confirmation from your **health insurance** that you are also covered in Germany.
- if applicable, a **statement detailing particular or previous medical conditions** (possibly recent X-ray photographs) and medication currently needed; Please bring any medication you need with you, as foreign prescriptions cannot be issued in Germany;
- your **vaccination certificate**; if possible, an international one.

To avoid difficulties communicating with German physicians and problems involving health insurance, you should undergo any necessary **prophylactic check-ups** and have **special medication** prescribed in your home country prior to your departure.

If you intend to drive a **car** during your stay in Germany, you should bring the following documents with you:

- An international driving license or foreign national driving license;
- An international "green" insurance card confirming third-party insurance coverage in Germany (if you plan to bring your car to Germany);
- A no-claims certificate from your automobile insurance company. (This will qualify you for a discount if you intend to take out third-party car insurance in Germany.)

## Checklist: Documents to bring with you for different registration processes 1-5

Registration Process 1-5	Details	You will receive	Documents to bring
<b>1. City registration</b> <i>Einwohnermeldebehörde/ Bürgeramt</i>	Registration of your residence, address, identity with city authorities	Residence certificate <i>Meldebescheinigung</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport + Color copy</li> <li>• Filled-out city registration form <i>Anmeldung</i></li> <li>• landlord confirmation form <i>Wohnungsgeberbestätigung</i></li> </ul>
<b>2. Bank Account</b>	Same applies to locked accounts (students with visa)	Bank account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport (copy)</li> <li>• Residence certificate <i>Meldebescheinigung</i></li> <li>• If applicable: German Tax-ID</li> </ul>
<b>3. Health Insurance</b>	Registration for a health insurance plan	<b>Proof of health insurance</b> for the submission at the university/for residence permit (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passport (copy)</li> <li>• Residence certificate <i>Meldebescheinigung</i></li> <li>• German Bank account (provided by your bank institute)</li> </ul>
<b>4. Enrollment (matriculation) at ASH</b> <i>Einschreibung/ Immatrikulation</i>	Registration at the university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student contract</li> <li>• Student ID card (<i>campuscard</i>) the following day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proof of health insurance issued for the university</li> <li>• Certified copy of your undergraduate degree certificate (diploma plus Transcript of Records in German or English translation)</li> <li>• <b>Original</b> Student Contracts (two hardcopies, signed)</li> <li>• Exmatriculation Certificate (hardcopy) <b>only</b> if you were enrolled in a German University (also applicable, if you studied at a German University as an exchange student)</li> </ul>
<b>5. Registration for Student Visa</b> <i>Landesamt für Einwanderung</i>	Registration in Germany as an International (non- EU)	Residence permit <i>Aufenthaltstitel</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Filled-out registration form <i>Antrag auf Erteilung eines Aufenthaltstitels</i></li> <li>• Proof of private or public health insurance plan</li> <li>• Valid passport for the entire duration of your study</li> <li>• German biometrical passport photo</li> <li>• Proof of enrollment <i>Immatrikulationsbescheinigung</i></li> <li>• Copy of your Residence Certificate/ City Registration <i>Meldebescheinigung</i></li> <li>• Proof of financial ability/ support (copy)</li> <li>• Procession fee</li> </ul>

All copies have to be un-stapled, printed on single paper sheets in A4 format (no US format, no double-sided prints, no bounded documents)