

PhD in Germany

Dear Aspirant,

Welcome to the DAAD! We are happy to know that you are considering Germany as a destination for your doctoral studies. The German doctorate enjoys an outstanding reputation in all disciplines, with the country producing about 25,000 doctorates every year. The number of foreign students registering themselves for a PhD has more than doubled in the last 12 years to just over 18,000. Indians form the second largest group of foreign doctoral students in Germany!

With over 140 institutions offering a wide range of subjects, Germany is all set to add that extra element to your professional life. We hope that the information we provide you here helps you in making a decision that will lay a solid foundation for your career. Happy reading!

What is the German university system like?

There are mainly two types of institutions of higher education in Germany:

Universities (including Universities of Technology, abbr. TU) are research-oriented and offer a wide variety of subjects. These can award doctorate degrees.

Universities of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschulen, abbr. FH), on the other hand, are practice-oriented and offer courses mainly in engineering, business administration, social sciences and design. These have strong links to the industry and offer possibilities like joint supervision of the professor and a company for a master thesis, but do not award doctorate degrees. As a master degree holder from a Fachhochschule, one is in principle eligible to apply for a doctoral position at a University.

Where can I do my doctorate?

If you have set your mind on a PhD in Germany, you can consider two approaches: the traditional approach and the structured doctoral programmes.

I. The traditional approach involves identifying a supervisor (Doktorvater / Doktormutter) at a German University who is willing to guide your research. This system offers a lot of freedom with no compulsory attendance, deadlines or curriculum, but calls for a great deal of personal initiative right from identifying a topic in your research field. This kind of doctorate takes about 3-5 years to complete.

II. Structured doctoral programmes are internationally oriented, conducted largely in English and are comparable to PhD programmes offered in English-speaking countries. Here supervision is carried out by several university teachers. These programmes lead to a PhD in about three years.

There are over 600 structured programmes in Germany:

1. **Doctoral programmes** at Universities (<http://www.daad.de/international-programmes>)
2. **Graduate schools** at Universities (<http://www.daad.de/international-programmes>)
3. **Research Training Groups** coordinated by the German Research Foundation (DFG) (www.dfg.de/gk)
4. **International Max Planck Research Schools** (www.mpg.de)

Which is the best institution in Germany?

The German answer to this question is: There is no "best university", neither in one subject and certainly not across all subjects. What Germany offers instead is a **multidimensional ranking, considering various criteria** like student and staff judgments on quality of teaching, atmosphere at the university, library and other equipment, student numbers, average study duration, number of graduations, third party funding etc. Several tables based on these considerations give you a detailed picture of the strengths and weaknesses of each university on www.university-ranking.de. Here you can find your programme by selecting a subject, a university or even a city in Germany. Other recommended rankings can be found on www.dfg.de/ranking and www.humboldt-foundation.de/ranking.

Am I eligible to apply for a PhD?

In Germany, every university is autonomous. This means that every university / study programme has its own set of criteria for admitting students. So please check the university website, and specifically the programme you are interested in to find out the exact admission requirements.

Some generalisation is, however, possible and one can say that as a Master degree holder from India, your degree is treated **at par** with a German Master or Magister degree and most universities will consider you eligible for their doctoral programmes provided you fulfill other criteria. In some cases, a further examination to assess the eligibility will be required.

Some universities may ask for the proof of your English language proficiency in form of TOEFL or IELTS scores, while most universities will ask for very good German language skills in case you have to write your thesis in German. In such cases, your knowledge of German needs to be certified through examinations like the TestDaF (<http://www.testdaf.de>) or DSH.

How do I go about applying?

Step 1: Collect general **information** from the DAAD, internet and brochures. Attend **counseling sessions** at the DAAD closer to you! We have our offices in Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. For our addresses, please visit www.daaddelhi.org

Decide which field of research you want to pursue and **shortlist potential universities and professors if you want to follow the traditional approach or the appropriate structured doctoral programme.**

A good place to start is www.daad.de/research-explorer.

The DAAD has now come up with PhDGermany – an online portal where German universities can advertise openings for doctoral positions and where students can also apply online. Do visit www.phdgermany.de

Academicians from India who have collaborations with German academicians can be a great source of information too!

- Step 2: **I. Traditional Approach: Find and convince a supervisor.**
Make sure that you approach a potential supervisor the write way and in good time – a **brief and well-structured synopsis** of the doctoral thesis is more likely to get you the right kind of response than a simple email stating that you are interested in doing a PhD! Communicate information about your background, academic performance and academic goals.
Get a letter of acceptance from your supervisor.
- II. Structured doctoral programme: Identify a programme.**
Contact the **selected university**. This will be your **most important source of information** as far as **exact details** about eligibility, programme structure, fee, application procedure etc. are concerned.
Check the **application deadline** for the programme chosen!
Application forms and other relevant material can be **downloaded** from the respective university website.
Send the application packet.
Get a confirmation of admission.
- Step 3: The Admission procedures vary for different universities and for different programmes.
Check about these with the university of your choice or your supervisor.

Make sure you have a **valid passport!**
- Step 4: Apply for a **student visa** as soon as you have the admission letter, as the procedure can take around two months. The German Embassy and the Consulates require **proof of funding** for the first year of studies (approx. INR 4-5 lakh).
To find out where you should apply for a visa, visit:
<http://www.new-delhi.diplo.de/Vertretung/newdelhi/en/02/Embassy.html>

Apply for a place in a hostel. In some cases the International Office (Akademisches Auslandsamt) of the university will help you.
- Step 5: Arrive in Germany at least a week before your course begins.
Contact the **International Office** (Akademisches Auslandsamt) of your university for guidance.
- Step 6: Get your residence permit within the first three months of your stay in Germany from the **Foreigners' Registration Office** (Auslaenderamt).

Do I need to know German?

As you have already read, Germany offers numerous PhD programmes with English as the sole or primary medium of instruction and the language for your thesis.

In any case, as a student in Germany, your life will not be limited to the university campus. You will surely want to interact with people, travel through the country-side and make the best of your time there. This is where knowledge of German will present a great advantage!

Universities offer beginner and well as advanced level courses where you can learn German. But you can start learning the language while you are still in India at one of the Goethe-Instituts (Max Mueller Bhavans) / Goethe-Zentrums <http://www.goethe.de/ins/in/lp/enindex.htm>

What kind of budget should I have in my mind?

As a doctoral student, you are expected to pay special semester contribution to the tune of Euro 50 to 250, depending upon the university and the services or benefits provided. Doctoral students are generally exempted from tuition fees for the first six semesters. **Thus, in Germany virtually every doctoral student gets a scholarship!**

Apart from the semester contribution, you will require about **Euro 740** (approx. INR 45,000) per month for **subsistence** i.e. housing, food, clothing, study material and other expenses such as health insurance and leisure activities. This amount can vary from city to city, and of course from lifestyle to lifestyle!

How can I finance my doctorate?

If you are participating in a structured doctoral programme and doing your doctorate at a graduate school, research centre or research training group, the issue of funding is usually resolved with you either working as a **research assistant or receiving a scholarship** of about Euro 1000 per month.

If you are pursuing your doctorate on the basis of the traditional approach, you can apply for a job as a **research assistant, if there is vacancy.**

Working as a research/doctoral assistant involves collaboration in research/teaching and doing administrative work in addition to completing the dissertation. Non-university institutions like Fraunhofer Institutes and also some companies offer doctoral candidates employment and / or fund their doctoral dissertations.

Are there any scholarships available?

The **DAAD** offers the most extensive scholarship programme. It supported 2,580 international doctoral candidates in 2008. Also a number of foundations support international candidates approved for the doctoral process. A database of scholarships offered by various German organizations can be found at www.funding-guide.de

What is a DAAD Scholarship like and how can I apply for it?

Step 1: Collect general **information** about DAAD scholarships available from www.daaddelhi.org Thoroughly check the eligibility criteria.

Attend **counseling sessions** at the DAAD closer to you! We have our offices in Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. For our addresses, please visit www.daaddelhi.org

Step 2: Once you have the **letter of acceptance** from your supervisor/**admission letter** from your university, **check our website www.daaddelhi.org for application details.**

The application deadline is **1st October** of the current year for a PhD beginning in the next year.

Step 3: If your application gets shortlisted, you will be invited for a personal interview at the DAAD Regional Office New Delhi around end of November.

Step 4: If you clear the interview, you have to attend a mandatory 6-month **German language course**, which is a necessary and important part of your scholarship (2 months in India + 4 months in Germany).

Step 5: Upon successful completion of the language course in India, you will leave for Germany and attend the 4-month advance level German language course.

Step 6: After the successful completion of your language course in Germany, your PhD will begin in October.

To get a comprehensive overview of various funding possibilities, please visit www.funding-guide.de

Can I work in Germany – as a student and later as a professional?

As mentioned, you can work as a research assistant, in which case, you will not face much of restrictions in terms of hours you put into working.

However, if you are doing a part-time job somewhere else, you are permitted to work for **120 full days or 240 half days** in a year. This will help you in getting a bit of extra pocket-money.

After completing your degree in Germany, you can stay on in the country for **up to 1.5 years to look for a job** that is in keeping with your education. Once you find a job, the residence permit issued to you for the purpose of studying, can be converted into a **residence permit for taking gainful employment**.

In Germany, a doctorate is a prerequisite for a career in research or higher education. **Your options** include:

Teaching/Research Assistantships

Postdoc Positions

Research Positions in Industry

The portal www.academics.com has Germany's biggest online job market for researchers.

There are also scholarships for Postdocs offered by the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation (www.avh.de) and other organizations.



Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
German Academic Exchange Service
Regional Office New Delhi
Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal & Sri Lanka

We hope that with this information you have a fair overview of higher education in Germany and what you have to do to get there. If you want to know more about universities and student life or read what other international students have to say about Germany, surf on www.study-in.de , www.research-in-germany.de and blog.scholarz.net
...And we must mention, that your reading of this document is not complete unless you have also visited the websites we have provided you with!

Wishing you all the very best for your future,

DAAD Regional Office New Delhi
Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka