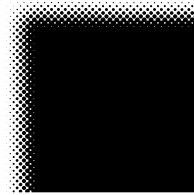


# Information for International Applicants



Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln  
Academy of Media Arts Cologne

Dear Prospective Students,

in this brochure, we have compiled important information for international applicants about studying in Germany and at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne (KHM).

Additionally, we provide guidance on the necessary formalities before and after enrolling in a German university, as well as useful tips, relevant contacts, and web links on topics such as financial aid, health insurance, housing, and working in Germany. We hope this document answers your most pressing questions.

↳ **Note on Web Links in This Document**

The links provided were tested at the time of publication. However, we cannot take responsibility for the content and accuracy of external websites. We advise you to verify any legal information, especially regarding immigration regulations, directly from official sources. We welcome your feedback and updates on the information provided!

# Table of Contents

## 1. Preparing for Studies in Germany and Applying to KHM

- Entry Requirements and Visa Procedures
- Structure of the German Academic Year
- Studying at KHM
- Application and Admission Process at KHM
- German Language Proficiency
- Recognition of Foreign Diplomas and University Entrance Qualification
- Application and Information on Guest Studies

## 2. Study Costs and Living Expenses

- Semester Contribution at KHM
- Cost of Living in Cologne

## 3. Health Insurance in Germany

- Public Health Insurance
- Private Health Insurance

## 4. Financial Support for Studies

- Scholarships and Grants
- Other Financing Options

## 5. Essential Formalities After Arrival in Germany

- Enrollment and Re-registration at KHM
- Registering as a Resident in Cologne
- Residence Permit for Study Purposes
- Opening a Bank Account
- General Legal Advice

## 6. Housing in Cologne

- Student Dormitories
- Private Housing

## 7. Job Search and Working in Germany

- Working While Studying
- Social Security: Pension and Health Insurance
- Taxes
- Residence After Graduation

# 1.

## Preparing for Studies in Germany and Applying to KHM

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### General information on studying in Germany

International applicants who wish to study in Germany should contact the German embassies and consulates well in advance to obtain information about study and living conditions, visa procedures, and residence permits.

The following links provide useful information and advice on topics such as living and studying in Germany, visas, financing, housing, health insurance:

- ↳ [Study in Germany](#)
- ↳ [German Student Services - Information for international students](#)
- ↳ [Federal Foreign Office – Visa and Services](#)
- ↳ [Handbook Germany](#)

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### Structure of the German Academic Year

Winter Semester:      October 1 – March 31

Summer Semester:    April 1 – September 30

Lectures begin in mid-October for the winter semester and early/mid-April for the summer semester. They end in mid-February and mid/end of July, respectively.

There are no lectures or seminars from mid-February to the end of March and from mid-July to the end of September.

For current semester and lecture period dates, visit [↳ KHM webpage](#).

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### Degree Programs at KHM

The Academy of Media Arts Cologne (KHM) offers a unique study concept in Germany that integrates film, art, and science within a diploma program in *Media Arts*.

Students can graduate with the following programme degrees:

Diplom I:            9-semester undergraduate program

Diplom II:          4-semester postgraduate program

The Diplom is comparable to a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in an international context.

For more details on German degree programs:

↳ [Higher Education Compass](#)

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## **Application and Admission Process at KHM**

Both international and German applicants must meet the same admission requirements at KHM. Since most courses are conducted in German, international applicants must demonstrate sufficient German language proficiency (see next section).

Admission procedures differ depending on the study program (Diplom I or II). The decisive selection criterion for admission to both the 9-semester and 4-semester programs is artistic aptitude for studying at the KHM, which is determined on the basis of work samples and a thematic assignment or project outline created specifically for the application. Applications are only accepted within specific deadlines, which are published on the KHM website.

For current application details (scroll down – see also FAQs):

↳ [KHM webpage](#)

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## **Important Note for Applicants from China**

Applicants from the People's Republic of China must follow a specific visa application procedure. It is strongly recommended to contact the APS (Academic Evaluation Center) at the German Embassy in Beijing before applying.

↳ [APS Website](#)

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## **German Language Proficiency**

International applicants must demonstrate sufficient German language skills to successfully participate in seminars, lectures, and projects. In addition, a good knowledge of German is important in order to deal with the necessary administrative procedures and everyday life in Germany.

At the KHM, German language skills must be demonstrated at least at level B2 (Goethe-Institut) or TDN 3 or TDN 4 (TestDaF).

*Good to know:* When applying, you must provide proof of your current level of German language proficiency, which must not be lower than level A2. The certificate for level B2 should be submitted at the latest upon enrolment.

Please also refer to the FAQs on the [KHM webpage](#)

More information on the named language requirements and certificates:

- ↳ [Goethe-Institut – German Examinations](#)
- ↳ [Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen](#)
- ↳ [TestDAF – Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache](#)

### **German Language Support at KHM**

KHM offers a **German tutorial** for students who wish to improve their language skills.

Regular participation is required.

Please note that this course does not prepare you for a B2 exam and that a basic knowledge of German is required to participate in the tutorial.

If you are interested, please send an e-mail to [↘ deutschtutorial@khm.de](mailto:deutschtutorial@khm.de).

### **Language schools in Cologne, tandem, and the offer KHM library**

There are numerous language schools in Cologne. The Volkshochschule Köln offers comparatively inexpensive courses.

↘ [Volkshochschule \(VHS\)](#), Tel.+49 221 22125990

Registered students at KHM can use digital language courses via the KHM library.

The University of Cologne maintains a platform where you can form language tandems:

↘ [Tandem platform of the University of Cologne](#)

Deutsche Welle offers free online language courses:

↘ [Deutsche Welle – Learn German](#)

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## **Recognition of Foreign Diplomas & University Entrance Qualifications**

To apply to KHM, students must provide proof of a recognized university entrance qualification equivalent to the German Abitur.

Useful information of uniassist:

↘ [Uni assist](#)

Applicants without an Abitur can still be admitted if they demonstrate exceptional artistic aptitude, which is assessed through a portfolio review.

Original certificates do not need to be submitted. Only certified copies and, in the case of foreign certificates, translated copies (in English or German) will be accepted.

↘ [FAQs](#)

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## **Application and Information on Guest Studies**

Only program students can be admitted to guest studies. Program students are scholarship holders of Erasmus+, the DAAD or other study foundations who have received a scholarship for guest studies (studies without a degree,

1–2 semesters) in Germany.

**Important note:** Guest studies at KHM do not grant formal admission to the Media Arts program. Moreover, guest students do not receive KHM project funding or financial support and are not permitted to take KHM exams. At the end of their stay, they will receive a transcript of records based on the courses and seminars they attended.

**Application Deadlines for Guest Studies:**

November 1 for the Summer Semester

May 1 for the Winter Semester

Before applying as a guest student, please contact the International Office.

↳ [International@khm.de](mailto:International@khm.de)

↳ [Application form guest students](#)

## 2.

# Study Costs and Living Expenses

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## Semester Fees at KHM

KHM does not charge tuition fees. However, all students must pay a **semester fee** of currently approximately **€ 372 per semester** (as of 2025/26).

The fee includes among other things:

- the **Deutschlandsemesterticket** (discounted Germany ticket for students, valid for an entire semester on local transport throughout Germany)  
You will automatically receive the Germany semester ticket when you enrol.
- Social contribution for the student union:** Finances the services provided by the student union
- AStA contribution:** A fee for the General Student Committee
- Device insurance:** Insurance for student devices.

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## Cost of living for students in Germany

According to the 22nd Social Survey from 2021, a student's expenses amount to **around € 1000 per month**.

These figures serve only for orientation purposes:

- ↳ [Deutsches Studierendenwerk – Social Survey](#)

Applicants from countries outside Europe must prove that they have sufficient financial resources when applying for a visa for study purposes (See section 5: Residence Permit for Study Purposes).

## 3.

# Health Insurance in Germany

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## Public Health Insurance

In Germany, health insurance is mandatory. When applying for a residence permit (for non-EU students), proof of valid health insurance must be provided.

Students in Germany are generally covered by a public health insurance policy if they are under 30 years old and have not yet exceeded 14 semesters of study. The benefits and contributions of all public health insurance providers are regulated by law, so coverage is nearly identical across all providers. Students can choose freely among these health insurance companies.

↳ [Health Insurance Providers in Germany](#)

EU-students can apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in their home country. With an EHIC, students can access healthcare in Germany, but in some cases, they must pay medical bills upfront and get reimbursed by their home insurance provider. With an EHIC, students can apply for an exemption from the mandatory public health insurance requirement in Germany.

For details about the EHIC, visit:

↳ [European Health Insurance Card](#)

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## Private Health Insurance

Students over 30 years old are not automatically covered by public health insurance. They have to choose between voluntary public health insurance or a private health insurance plan. Since the minimum term for statutory health insurance is 12 months, students up to the age of 30 who are only staying in Germany temporarily (e. g., visiting students) are also allowed to take out private insurance.

**Important:** If a student opts out of public health insurance, they remain privately insured for their entire stay in Germany. Switching back to public health insurance is not possible unless the student takes on employment subject to social security contributions (“sozialversicherungspflichtige Beschäftigung”). In that case, the employer automatically registers the student with public health insurance.

*Note:* Since private health insurance is generally more expensive, it is highly recommended that regularly enrolled students choose a public health insurance.

Further helpful information on health insurance in Germany:

↳ [Deutsches Studierendenwerk – Health Insurance for International Students](#)

## 4.

# Financial Support for Studies

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## Scholarships and Study Grants

Anyone who wishes to finance all or part of their studies with a scholarship should find out about funding opportunities at an early stage. Applications for a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholarship must generally be submitted about one year in advance. Apart from the DAAD, there are many other institutions in Germany that offer scholarships for students.

### Useful Links for Study Funding:

- ↳ [German Academic Exchange Service \(DAAD\)](#)
- ↳ [Catholic Academic Exchange Service \(KAAD\)](#)
- ↳ [Scholarships and study foundations](#)
- ↳ [Cologne Student Services \(Financial Aid\)](#)

Under certain conditions, students at KHM can apply for the Germany Scholarship:

- ↳ [Germany Scholarship](#)

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## Other Financing Options

Students from EU countries may be eligible to apply for BAföG (German government student financial aid).

- ↳ [BAföG Financial Aid](#)

International students, who are not eligible for BAföG but hold a valid residence permit, may apply for **housing allowance** (“Wohngeld”).

- ↳ [Housing Allowance \(Wohngeld\)](#)

If your income meets certain criteria, you may also apply for a **Housing entitlement certificate** (“Wohnberechtigungsschein”), which grants access to publicly subsidized housing.

- ↳ [Housing Entitlement Certificate \(Wohnberechtigungsschein\)](#)

# 5. Essential Formalities After Arrival in Germany

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## Enrolment and Re-registration at KHM & Obtaining the Access Card

Enrolment takes place at the Student Office of KHM.

### Student Office

Heumarkt 14, 1st Floor  
50667 Cologne, Germany  
Phone: +49 (0)221 20189194  
E-Mail: [studoffice@khm.de](mailto:studoffice@khm.de)

### Office Hours:

Monday & Tuesday: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Thursday: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

For the latest information on enrolment, visit:

↳ [KHM Student Office](#)

### Orientation Week at KHM

During the first week of the winter semester, KHM organizes an orientation program for new students. New students receive an introduction to the KHM and its departments, the student's access card for campus facilities and instructions on e-mail accounts and student logins.

For campus maps and additional student resources, visit:

↳ [KHM webpage](#)

If you are studying at KHM for more than one semester, you must re-register at the end of each semester.

Information on re-registration:

↳ [KHM Student Office](#)

### Megaphon Mailing List

*Megaphon* is an e-mail distribution list, founded by students and is operated by a third-party provider. The KHM is not responsible for the content of the posts. The mailing list is mainly subscribed to by students, alumni, and university staff at KHM, but anyone else can subscribe as well. Event announcements, apartment listings, job offers, etc. are published here. The megaphon is not moderated. KHM is not responsible for the content of posts.

Subscribe to the Megaphon mailing list here:

↳ [Megaphon-KHM Subscription](#)

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## Registering as a Resident in Cologne

If you stay in Cologne for more than three months, you must register at a resident registration office (Meldehalle) within two weeks of your arrival. You can register online or at a customer center of your choice.

↳ [City of Cologne – Residence Registration](#)

**More information and online registration:**

↳ [Contact and Accessibility](#)

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## Residence Permit for Study Purposes

Non-EU students must apply for a residence permit for study purposes.

EU students do not need a residence permit.

It is crucial to apply at least 1–2 months before your visa expires.

Your application must be submitted to the Immigration Office (“Ausländeramt”) closest to your residence.

↳ [City of Cologne – Student Residence Permit](#)

↳ [Contact and Accessibility](#)

*Please use the online contact form provided by your local Immigration Office.*

*Please use the contact form to get in touch with us. As the Cologne Foreigners’ Registration Office is currently undergoing restructuring and is generally understaffed, please be prepared for longer waiting times.*

We ask students whose visas have already expired and who have not been given an appointment for renewal, or who are experiencing other problems with their visa application, to contact us at:

↳ [international@khm.de](mailto:international@khm.de)

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## Opening a Bank Account

A German bank account is necessary for handling rent payments, tuition fees, and other transactions. The Sparkasse Cologne also accepts account holders, who are staying for less than 12 months.

When opening an account, most banks require that the account holder has sufficient knowledge of German to understand the terms and conditions of the contract. Alternatively, an accompanying person may be present to translate if necessary.

### **Required Documents for a Bank Account:**

- Valid passport
- Certificate of enrolment (Immatrikulationsbescheinigung)
- Resident registration certificate (Meldebescheinigung)

### **Blocked Account**

As part of the visa application process, international students must prove that they can finance their living expenses in Germany. For certain visa categories, a so-called blocked account must be set up.

Blocked account: Only a certain amount can be withdrawn each month. There must be enough money in the blocked account to finance the stay for an entire academic year. Since January 1, 2025, EUR 11,904 must be available in the blocked account when applying for a visa. The amount is based on the maximum BAföG funding rates.

There are numerous providers of blocked accounts that you can research online. With many providers, you can open the account online. The fees incurred for the blocked account must be paid in addition to the blocked amount.

Helpful information and tips can be found here:

- ↘ [Federal Foreign Office – Opening and closing a blocked bank account](#)
- ↘ [Study in Germany – Proof of Financing](#)

Visiting students who do not yet have an account or a blocked account upon arrival are advised to open an account with Sparkasse. Accounts that are used for less than twelve months can be opened there.

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## **General Legal Advice**

The Kölner Anwaltverein e.V. offers straightforward and free legal advice at its consultation office located at the Cologne Local Court.

- ↘ [Anwaltliche Beratungsstelle Amtsgericht Köln](#)

## 6. Housing in Cologne

As in most major cities in Germany, affordable housing is limited and in high demand in Cologne. Unfortunately, KHM does not have any housing available for international students. Students must therefore find their own accommodation in good time.

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### Student Dormitories

Cologne has several student dormitories, usually offering furnished rooms or apartments. Student housing is managed by:

- ↳ [Cologne Student Services \(Studierendenwerk\)](#)

**Important:** Apply early! There are long waiting lists (up to a year) for dormitory rooms. If you don't receive a room offer 1–2 months before moving in, contact the student housing office.

List of student dormitories and online application:

- ↳ [Cologne Student Services – Housing](#)
- ↳ [Online Application for Student Housing](#)

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### Private Housing in Cologne

Many students rent private apartments or live in shared apartments (Wohngemeinschaften = “WG”). Please note that private apartments are mostly unfurnished.

*Good to know:* The Cologne Student Services also collects offers from private landlords.

- ↳ [Cologne Student Services – Private Housing](#)

It is also worth a try to send a request via the KHM “megaphon” (see page 12)

**Shared apartments and private housing:**

- ↳ [WG-gesucht](#)
- ↳ [Immobilien Scout 24](#)
- ↳ [Immowelt](#)
- ↳ [Kleinanzeigen](#)
- ↳ [Stadtrevue](#)
- ↳ [Housinganywhere](#)

Apartments and rooms are also advertised in Cologne daily newspapers (*Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, etc.) and on the corresponding websites. Most offers are published in the Friday and Saturday editions. You can also publish your own apartment search there.

Short-term Housing (Hostels & Airbnb):

- ↳ [Youth Hostels in Germany](#)
- ↳ [Station Hostel for Backpackers in Cologne](#)
- ↳ [Hostelworld](#)
- ↳ [airbnb](#)

# 7. Job Search and Working in Germany

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## Working While Studying – for EU-students and non-EU-students

Enrolled students from EU-countries are permitted to work in Germany, as long as hours do not exceed the amount of 20 during lecture period.

Please be aware that students from other countries are only allowed to work 140 full days or 280 half-days (up to 4 hours a day) per year. Only days on which one actually worked are counted (excluding vacation days, public holidays, sick days). If internationals want to work more than the permitted number of days, they need the approval of the immigration authorities. If students exceed this limit without approval, they run the risk of losing their student insurance status and be classified as regular employees. In this case, higher social insurance fees apply.

Self-employed or freelancing activities (invoice for work performance) are only allowed with the permission of the immigration authorities.

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## Social Security: Pension & Health Insurance

Anyone working as an employee in Germany must have health insurance and pay contributions to the pension insurance scheme. The employer registers employees with the pension insurance scheme, and they are then assigned a social security number. For employees who earn less than €556 per month (mini-job or marginal employment), the employer pays the pension insurance contributions. People who are living in Germany temporarily, such as guest students, can be exempted from the pension insurance obligation.

### Further information on „Mini- und Midijob“:

- ↳ [Bundesagentur für Arbeit – Minijob](#)
- ↳ [Minijob-Zentrale](#)
- ↳ [DAAD – Information on Side Jobs for international students](#)

### Job search:

- ↳ [Stellenwerk Köln – Studentenjobs in Köln](#)
- ↳ [Stellenmarkt Studierendenwerk](#)
- ↳ [Jobportal der TH Köln](#)
- ↳ [Jobmensa](#)

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## Taxes

In Germany, employees who are not self-employed have to pay income tax. This tax is automatically deducted from their monthly pay check. However, income tax only has to be paid if earnings exceed the so called “basic allowance”. For the year 2025, the basic allowance is 12,096 euros (in 2024 it was 11,784 euros). So, only if students earn more than this amount, they need to pay income tax.

*Good to know:* If you paid too many taxes, you can file a tax return and get a refund!

### More information on taxes:

- ↳ [Tax office NRW – Information for students](#)
- ↳ [Deutsches Studierendenwerk – Job regulations for international students](#)

Please note that the KHM cannot provide advice on tax matters and can only provide limited advice on questions relating to working during and after your studies.

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## Residence After Graduation

After graduation the student visa expires. However, graduates can extend their residence permit by one year under certain conditions

Please contact your local Immigration Office for further details or the Federal Employment Agency.

- ↳ [Bundesagentur für Arbeit](#)
- ↳ [NRW Service Portal](#)
- ↳ [Make it in Germany](#)

### *When are studies considered complete?*

Studies are considered complete as soon as a degree certificate, transcript, or certificate from the university confirming successful completion of the program can be presented.

# Imprint

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