

NATIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GERMAN UNIVERSITIES REGARDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Preamble

In adopting this National Code of Conduct for German Universities Regarding International Students the universities¹ reaffirm their sustained interest in attracting and hosting qualified international students, doctoral students and (young) scientists and researchers.

The Code of Conduct aims to establish a set of common minimum standards in the fields of "Information and Marketing, Admissions, Supervision, Support and Advice, plus Follow-up Services", on which international students can rely. The guiding principle is, wherever possible, to grant international students² the same rights as are available to German or EU students and, over and above this, to offer them the services and assistance that they particularly need as foreign guests. While the minimum standards defined in the following have already been introduced at practically all German universities, many higher education institutions offer services that extend beyond this, and will continue to do so.

I. Information and Marketing

1. The universities herewith commit themselves to providing comprehensive information, preferably also in English, and, where appropriate, in other common foreign languages, too,

- on the studies they offer
- on the admissions requirements and the admissions process, as well as on any costs that may accrue as a result, and
- on the local study and living conditions

thereby also referring to the most important national sources of information for international students in Germany (in the form of links), in particular those offered by the

- German Rectors' Conference: Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK)
www.hochschulkompass.de
- German Academic Exchange Service: Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD)
www.daad.de/deutschland/index.en.html
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) www.bmbf.de
- Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs: Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK) www.kmk.org
- Accreditation Council: Akkreditierungsrat www.akkreditierungsrat.de
- German National Association for Student Affairs: Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW)
www.internationale-studierende.de

¹ Only member institutions of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) may be official signatories to the National Code of Conduct for German Universities Regarding International Students. Nevertheless, universities that are not members of the HRK are free to express their commitment to the standards and goals laid down in the Code of Conduct and communicate this on their website.

² Students who are foreign nationals and gained their secondary school-leaving certificate outside Germany and who are enrolled in a degree programme.

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- Federal Union of International Students in Germany (Bundesverband Ausländischer Studierender) www.bas-ev.de

A list of all relevant links on education, science and research, and life and living in Germany can be obtained from the DAAD at www.germany-opportunities.de.

2. The information on the degree programmes and other study programmes³ offered by the university clearly describes the knowledge, skills and professional qualifications acquired with the degree, including, if applicable, the associated rights to practise certain occupations in Germany and the European Union. The information given specifies the body that accredited the degree programme and the state ministry that, where appropriate, approved it.

3. The information on degree programmes also contains details on

- the type and number of certificates, academic achievements and other examinations,
- the language requirements,
- the previous learning requirements and the recognition procedures for previous academic and examination achievements,
- the costs of the degree programme as well as any additional costs that might arise in connection with the stay,
- possible fee waivers, scholarships and grants, and
- all important dates and deadlines.

4. Degree programmes offered by German universities are generally taught in German. If another language, in most cases English, is specified as the language of instruction for part or all of the degree programme, the university will ensure that the teachers have the necessary language proficiency and skills required and that appropriate foreign language teaching materials are available. For students who are not adequately proficient in the German language, any important information – including information on general everyday life at university – will be made available in the respective languages of instruction.

5. If the university markets its study opportunities internationally, it will respect the principles of truth and fairness towards competitors; all comparative, disparaging or denigratory advertising vis-à-vis third parties is prohibited.

6. If the university commissions agents⁴ to recruit international students, these must be obliged to observe this Code of Conduct and if this requirement is substantially or repeatedly violated, they must be relieved of their mandate. The agent's competence and authority as well as any fees received by the agent in performing the given duties must be made transparent for the students. The university will monitor the work done by its agents, including by regularly interviewing or surveying its international applicants and students.

II. Admission and Placement

1. In all cases the decision on the admission of international students lies with the individual university within the scope of the legal provisions. The university also governs the admissions conditions and, in particular, the selection criteria in admissions regulations, whose content is documented in a generally accessible form. Where degree programmes have been included in central selection procedures on account of nationwide applicable admissions restrictions, places for German and equivalently qualified undergraduate students from EU member states will be allocated by a Joint University Admissions Service Centre (Servicestelle für Hochschulzulassung: www.hochschulstart.de).

³ A study opportunity completed with an academic degree, a state examination or a certificate. Studies can be organised as face-to-face studies, distance studies or online studies.

⁴ An individual or institution (business) acting in an intermediary capacity on behalf of the university in advising and recruiting international students at home and abroad.

2. The university may transfer responsibility for the initial check to determine whether the application is complete and the formal admissions requirements have been met (formal eligibility) to a third party, in particular, an association established by German universities called "uni-assist" e.V., and may charge an appropriate fee for processing the application.

3. As far as the selection and admission of foreigners from non-EU states ("third countries") is concerned, different processes and regulations may apply under German law than are applicable for students from EU countries. In particular, the universities can require applicants from third countries to sit a – possibly fee-charging – academic aptitude test and will take the results into consideration when making the selection decision. The university will announce in good time and in a generally accessible format whether and if such a test is required, in which subjects it is required and how the test results are taken into consideration in the admissions decision.

4. The admission of international applicants to degree programmes with German as the language of instruction generally requires proof that the applicant is adequately proficient in the German language, either by taking the "Test für Deutsch als Fremdsprache" (TestDaF) language test in Germany or abroad or by taking the "Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang" (DSH) language examination at the university or by presenting equivalent language certificates (cf. www.sprachnachweis.de). The requirements may differ from university to university as well as within the same university from one subject/faculty to the next. The university will provide information on the requirements that it expects applicants to meet.

5. If an applicant for a degree programme, under recognition of and credit for academic and examination achievements, applies to be placed in a higher semester for a degree programme, the relevant office at the university will decide on this in a verifiable procedure and within an acceptable timeframe. Under certain circumstances, the placement may also be made subject to certain conditions (conditional placement). As far as recognition and credit decisions are concerned, the principle of "equivalent, not identical" will not be based on a schematic comparison, but rather on an overall analysis and assessment. The equivalence agreements approved by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) as well as respective agreements concluded by the German Rectors' Conference, and of those made within the scope of university partnerships, will be respected.

6. The university commits itself to running the specified degree programmes as soon as (international) students have commenced their studies. If individual modules cannot be offered, the university will endeavour to provide adequate replacements. If a whole degree programme cannot be run, this must be announced without delay, as far as possible at least three months prior to the start of the degree programme. If international students have already arrived in Germany to take part in this degree programme, the university will endeavour to find an adequate replacement.

III. Academic, Language and Social Support, Advice and Counselling for International Students

1. The university will provide specific offerings and services for the international students before they start their studies to help them find out more about studying and living in Germany and about their university town and its surroundings. It will tell the registered international students who the right contact persons are for their academic questions.

2. The university will support the students in acquiring and improving their German language skills by providing pre-study and study-integrated language courses. If the university itself does not offer language courses, it will advise students about courses offered by third parties.

3. The university will offer programmes and contacts to help the international students integrate into university life, everyday life, and the working world, as well as into the local and regional

cultural and social setting. Support in social matters, advice and counselling will, as far as possible, include study-integrated training phases completed outside the university (extramural).

4. The university will also offer to help international students, who have been admitted to studies, find a place to live in the town in question by at least providing useful information on the housing market and student housing.

5. The university will advise the international students who the contact persons at the university and at the authorities responsible for residence permit questions are and will assist in the event of uncertainties.

6. The university will inform the students about the applicable law relating to intellectual property rights. Students will be advised at an early stage about the nature and consequences of plagiarism in scientific and artistic work. The university will ensure that intellectual property developed by students (research findings, artistic work) will be protected within the scope of the applicable law.

IV. Services for International Students on and after Completing their Studies

1. The university will ensure that appropriate degree certificates and documents certifying the holder's participation in or completion of a degree programme will be delivered to the international students on time and free of charge.

A Diploma Supplement will be issued together with the degree certificate. On application, the university will issue duly authenticated English translations of the graduation documents (Degree Certificate, Examination Certificate and/or Transcript of Records).

2. The university will endeavour to provide international students with relevant advice and information on career opportunities during their studies as well as upon completing their studies.

3. The university will offer former students (alumni) opportunities with which they can maintain their contacts with their institution and will also inform them about programmes provided by national funding organisations in Germany for returnees and alumni heading for their home countries (e.g. www.alumniportal-deutschland.org).

V. Handling Complaints

1. The university will name a contact point for international students to file complaints and to request corrective action in cases of non-compliance with the Code of Conduct (e.g. the university executive member responsible for international affairs). The full and final decision on the complaint must not be left to the office against which the complaint was made. The complainant's right to appeal against administrative acts by the university or, in appropriate cases, to take legal action before civil, administrative or criminal courts remains unaffected.

2. If disputes cannot be settled within the university, international students may appeal to a Joint Arbitration Office based at the HRK.

VI. Entry into Force

1. The Code of Conduct will enter into force after it has been adopted by the HRK General Meeting and will remain in force until such time as it is revoked. Amendments to the Code of Conduct require a decision by the HRK General Meeting.

2. The HRK will submit the Code of Conduct to the universities for accession. Accession by a university will be effected by notifying the HRK. The HRK will maintain a list of universities that have acceded to the Code of Conduct; the list will be documented in the HRK Higher Education Compass (Hochschulkompass: www.hochschulkompass.de).