



Universität
Münster

Handbook for international doctoral researchers

Winter 2024/25



© Peter Leißmann

wissen.leben



CERes
Münster Centre for
Emerging Researchers

**WE CREATE
SPACES.**

**YOU GAIN
PERSPECTIVES.**



Content

1	Herzlich Willkommen – Welcome!	4	Research culture at the University of Münster	23
2	Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes)	6	Health and well-being	24
	CERes – A place to come together	7	The PhD representatives	25
	Support for international doctoral researchers	8	Financing your doctoral studies	26
	Workshop programme	9	4 Getting Started – first steps in Münster	27
	The buddy programme	10	Accommodation	28
	Networking opportunities	11	Moving in and residence registration	29
3	Doctoral studies at the University of Münster	12	Visa and residence permit	30
	Doctorate – what does that actually mean?	13	Banking and taxes	31
	Your new roles, rights, and duties	14	Checklists	33
	Academic key dates and public holidays	15	5 Useful information	35
	Central points of contact and services at the university	16	Medical care	36
	Enrolment and student ID card	17	Transportation	37
	Good Scientific Practice	20	German courses	38
	Getting your research published	21	Leisure activities	39
	Dissertation and defence	22		
			Impressum	

1. Herzlich Willkommen – Welcome!

Dear international doctoral researchers,

Welcome to the University of Münster! I am delighted that you have chosen the University of Münster as a partner for the advancement for your academic career.

The doctorate is an important milestone in the career of young scientists. In the sense of the Latin word *promovere*, you will move a significant step forward –scientifically and personally. To support you on your way from beginning to end, and to make the most of your time in Münster in between, we have implemented a range of centralised and decentralised measures and programmes.

Aside from your department, cluster or graduate school, Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes) is a great starting point. Here you will find advice and support, have the opportunity to visit seminars and workshops, and find peers for networking and exchanging ideas. At the University of Münster, we firmly believe that only close cooperation and personal contacts between cultures and nations can lead to both academic and human progress. Thank you for being a part of our community.

I wish you an inspiring and academically valuable time in Münster!



Prof. Dr. Maike Tietjens
Vice-Rector for Academic Career
Development and Diversity

Herzlich Willkommen – Welcome!

Dear doctoral researchers,

we warmly welcome you at the University of Münster – one of Germany's largest and oldest universities. It is our pleasure that you have chosen to undertake your doctoral studies programme here and we look forward to supporting you during the next exciting years.

As a doctoral researcher you will perform original research – be it within the structures of a graduate school or simply under the guidance of your supervisor – and you will develop your professional skills at an incomparable level. CERes Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers supports doctoral researchers by providing tailor-cut advice, workshops, and networking opportunities.

We encourage you to go beyond: try new things, make new friends, enjoy your life in Münster, and grow into your better self!

Your Team at Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes)





CERes

Münster Centre for
Emerging Researchers



© Sabine Schneider

2. Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers

At the Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes), support is provided for doctoral researchers and postdocs from all disciplines.



Together with emerging researchers and other stakeholders at the University, we devote our efforts not only to providing training for doctoral researchers and postdocs but also to raising their visibility.

We offer advice and coaching, and opportunities for networking; we also offer our own training sessions and a broad programme of workshops – all with the aim of strengthening interdisciplinary skills. We also point out and explain career paths and provide guidance for a researcher's individual development, both inside and outside the academic context.

Together – not only the team but also all doctoral researchers, postdocs, supervisors and stakeholders in the faculties – we are shaping CERes as a place where people can come together, and where emerging researchers can play their part. And where certain things are strengthened: an awareness of social responsibility, the importance of science communication, and the opportunities which doctoral researchers and postdocs have for using their potential and their skills to benefit our society. CERes opens up spaces enabling researchers to shape their thinking, their work and their actions with a view to sustainability.

Support for international doctoral researchers



International doctoral researchers are often faced with special challenges. One key factor, particularly at the beginning, can be that of having a contact person. CERes is there to provide personal advice and support for you.

In addition to numerous English-language workshops, CERes also offers concrete help with formalities as well as welcome and information events.

Moreover, we promote peer-to-peer support and interdisciplinary networking with the **Buddy Programme**.

Advisors

Sabine Schneider – general advice

Eva Woltering – visa and residence permit

Larissa Mrwa – support incoming doctoral researchers

Are you looking for advice? Book an appointment with us:
ceres.international@uni-muenster.de

Workshop programme

Would you like to improve your interdisciplinary skills or get to know doctoral candidates from different departments? Here you can find a selection of events for the initial phase of your doctorate.

- 21.10.2024 **Schreiben mit Leichtigkeit und System**
- 05.-8.11.2024 **Take off with CERes - Give your (new) career phase a boost!**
- 05.11.2024 **Disciplinary identity, methods, and objectivity**
- 20.-21.11.2024 **Navigating power hierarchies and nurturing partnerships**
- 28.-29.11.2024 **Academic Writing: Crafting clear and coherent research papers**
- 03.12.2024 **Good scientific practice (all disciplines)**
- 04.12.2024 **Walk & Talk Sessions: Research stay abroad- motivation, benefits and challenges**



© Peter Leßmann

Have a look at the [programme](#) at CERes and [sign up!](#)

The buddy programme

Embarking on doctoral research is not only exciting. It is also challenging – all the more so for doctoral researchers from abroad. You not only have to familiarise yourself with the new academic environment – you also have to acclimatise yourself in a new country. Often without being able to speak German. With the buddy programme, our aim is to promote peer-to-peer support right at the beginning of the doctoral process, bringing together new doctoral researchers and those who have already completed their first year.

Peer-to-peer exchanges open up space for

- a friendly welcome and better orientation for new doctoral researchers
- extending interdisciplinary networking
- actively shaping a doctoral culture characterised by openness, curiosity and solidarity

Further [information and registration](#).



Networking opportunities

InchbyInch – our community garden

Get away from your desk – get out into the field! Be active in a community and keep both feet on the ground: our community garden InchbyInch offers an excellent opportunity to do so. In the garden you can learn about ecological and sustainable gardening, build a “sweat” network and enjoy the shared harvest.



Information and registration [InchbyInch](#) and [MünsterXchange](#).



MünsterXchange

Our MünsterXchange programme aims to establish an intergenerational and intercultural network. Monthly meetings offer a basis for both sides to get to know each other. Emerging researchers from all over the world share their view with people in retirement and, at the same time, benefit from their rich store of experience. How the meetings run in detail is entirely in the hands of those taking part. Joint excursions, exchanging professional know-how, coaching – a lot of things are possible.

3. Doctoral studies at the University of Münster



founded in 1780



about 4000 doctoral researchers, about 16% international



700-800 graduations per year



15 faculties

30 structured doctoral programmes

2 clusters of excellence



holistic support

Sources and further statistics

Doctorate – what does that actually mean?

- You will either pursue your doctoral studies individually under the guidance of a professor (your supervisor) or within a structured programme (graduate school)
- On average, it takes 4,5 years to complete the doctoral studies
- Some doctoral researchers are employed by the university, others have an external scholarship, or use their own funds to finance the doctoral studies
- The requirements on courses, the thesis, the defence, etc. can be found in the doctoral regulations
- The dissertation (monograph or cumulative) is seen as the first independent research output
- For research or study related matters you should contact your supervisor or the graduate school
- If you have other questions, feel free to contact us at [CERes](#)

Important: Familiarise yourself with the doctoral regulations ([Promotionsordnung](#)) at the beginning of your studies!

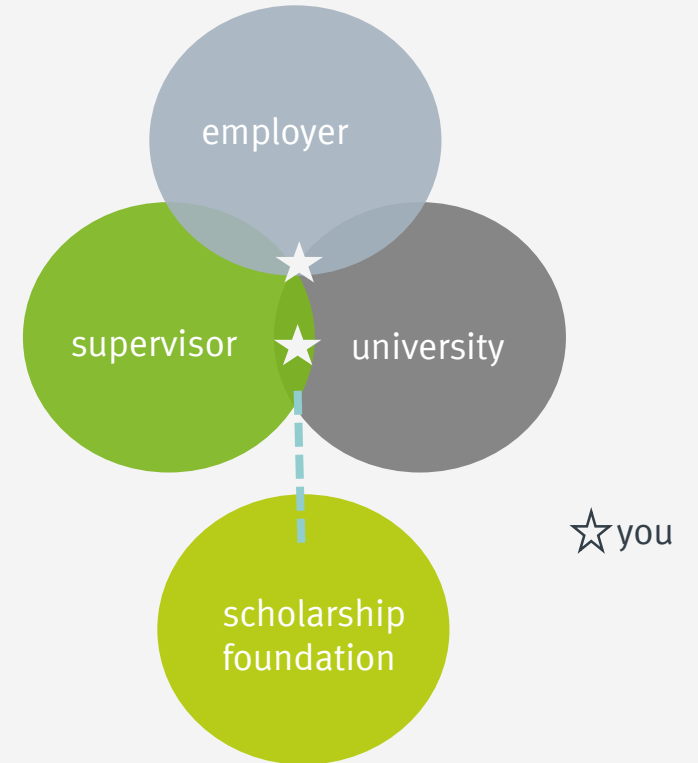


Your new roles, rights, and duties

As a doctoral researcher you are in a very special position. Your role, and thereby your rights and duties, are mostly threefold.

First, most doctoral researchers are enrolled so they are **members of the university** (students). Second, all doctoral researchers have a **supervision agreement** with a supervisor (researchers under individual guidance). Some doctoral researchers are also **employees** of the university, or **scholarship holders**.

Your rights and duties might be different within these roles, e.g. as an employed doctoral researcher you might be expected to teach, whereas your scholarship provider might require updates on your progress. Sometimes you might also find challenges, e.g. when you have teaching responsibilities but need to go on fieldwork abroad for your own research.



If you are in doubt about your rights and duties, you can contact various university institutions for support, including CERes.

Academic key dates and public holidays

Academic Year	
Winter Semester	1. October – 31. March
Enrolment	15. August – 15. November
Summer Semester	1. April – 30. September
Enrolment	15. February – 15. May

Public Holidays	
03.10.24	Day of German unity
01.11.24	All Saints
25. & 26.12.24	Christmas
01.01.25	New Year
18.04.25	Good Friday
21.04.25	Easter Monday
01.05.25	Labour Day
29.05.25	Ascension Day
09.06.25	Whit Monday
19.06.25	Corpus Christi

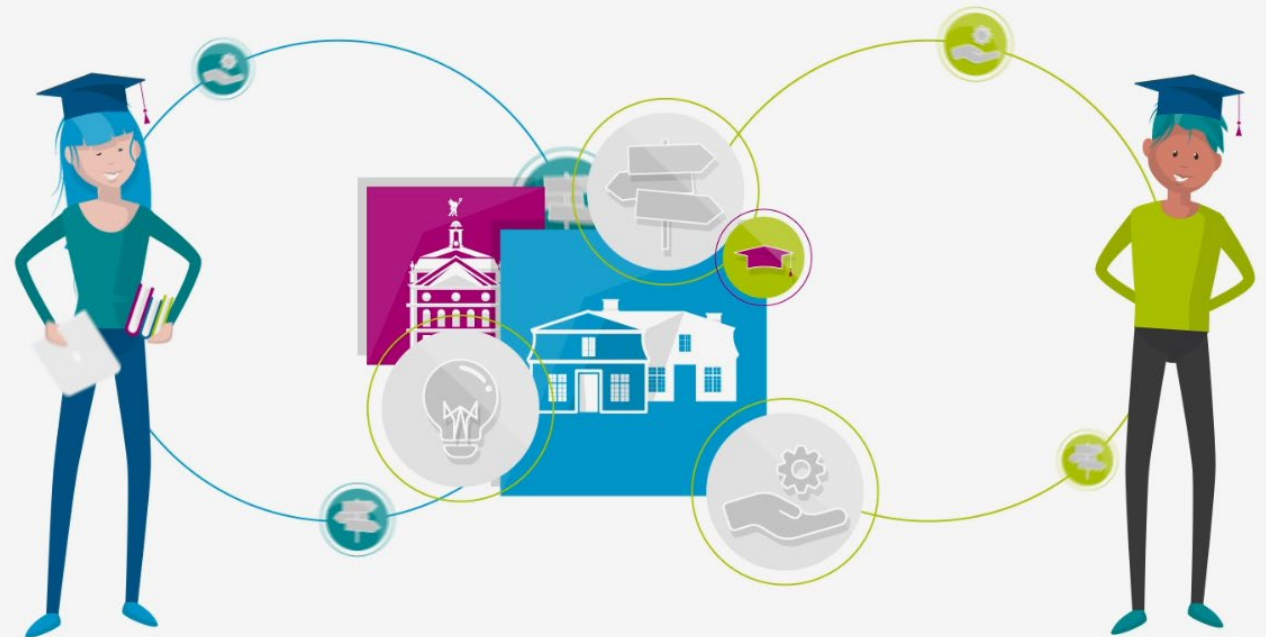


Source: Wikimedia Commons

Central points of contact and services at the university

Books, prints, sports – here you can get an overview of Münster University's services for students.

The university also offers research funding support as well as academic support services.



© University of Münster/ CERes

Enrolment and student ID card

You may enrol for the winter semester from the beginning of August to 15 November and for the summer semester from the beginning of February to 15 May.

1. Fill in the [online enrolment form](#).
2. Upload your documents.

In some cases, for instance if your doctoral studies are in biology, you need to contact the doctoral studies examination office first and make sure, that you have all required documents (the requirements depend on the doctoral studies regulations and the corresponding [enrolment regulations](#)).

Are you a visiting doctoral researcher?

You have the opportunity to enrol for a maximum of 3 semesters. Please contact CERes for support.

Research stays abroad

If you do a research stay abroad for one or two semesters, you can apply for a partial refund of the semester fees.

So you have now successfully completed the online enrolment form and sent the required documents to the university by post. You will get your confirmation of the enrolment (either PDF or via post). Within two weeks you will receive a letter with further instructions and your University of Münster login details. To finish the process, you need to:

1. Pay the semester fee (approx. 320,17 €)

- Go to www.uni-muenster.de/stu and log in (account details on the back of the paper)
- Choose “Studiumsverwaltung” (Administration of Study) at the left navigation, then “Bezahlen und Rückmelden” (Payment and Re-Registration). Now you will see how much you need to transfer, the payment details and a 13-digits reference number. Make sure that you transfer enough money to cover any currency rates. **REMEMBER!** Repeat this step each semester on time and check your university e-mail account regularly.

2. Upload your photo [here](#).

Once you have done this, you will receive your student ID card to your correspondence address. Now you are fully enrolled!

Student ID card

By presenting your student ID card, you identify yourself as a student at the University of Münster. Your student ID also entitles you to concessions at public facilities, such as the municipal swimming pools.

Library user ID card

Your student ID also doubles as a library user ID for use at the University Library (ULB). On the back of your student ID card, you will find your personal ULB user number printed under the bar code. For security reasons, this ULB user number must be activated one time only. You activate your card by simply logging in to the University of Münster's [Self-Service portal](#)

Copy card

With your student ID card, you can print and make copies on any of the 300 multifunctional devices available in the University's libraries, institutes and central buildings.

Mensa card

Your student ID lets you purchase meals and beverages at all dining halls and bistros at the University at the student rate.

Find out more about the use as a [copy and mensa card](#).



Good Scientific Practice

All scientists at the University of Münster are responsible for exhibiting the fundamental values of good scientific practice in their conduct, and for advocating for them.

In July 2023, the Senate passed the Statute “Securing good scientific practice”, which obliges researchers and academic staff of the University to exercise fairness and honesty in academic work. They are also obliged by the Statute to continuously update their knowledge about the standards of good scientific practice and to engage in dialogue with other scientists. There are numerous events organised by the individual faculties and Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes) for that purpose. In their function as heads of individual research units, doctoral supervisors are responsible for adequate individual supervision and career development of junior researchers and therefore play a particularly important role in the transmission of good scientific practice to their doctoral candidates. In line with the Statute, some doctoral regulations and supervision agreements also state that doctoral candidates and doctoral supervisors are obliged to comply with the rules of good scientific practice.



Getting your research published

During your doctoral research, publishing your work already plays a key role in most academic disciplines – as a means not only of gaining recognition for your research results or of strengthening your academic reputation, but also as an obligation to the principles of good research practice and Open Science. As a result of being published, your research becomes part of global scientific discussions and a motor for progress in society.

We support you with offers regarding publishing strategies and peer-review processes. **Münster University Library (ULB)** offers specific ways to get things published, including multi-media work, as well as regular workshops in our programme on the topics of digital publishing and research data management.



© jcomp auf Freepik

Dissertation and defence

Doctoral researchers demonstrate their ability in scientific research by a written doctoral thesis or a cumulative thesis.

- The thesis must meet specific formal criteria, which are defined in the **examination regulations** of the relevant departments and their doctoral studies examination offices (Promotionsprüfungsamt).
- It is recommended to have a closer look at the examination regulations to be informed about the rights and duties of a doctoral researcher.
- The thesis does not have to be written in German as you and your supervisor can agree on another language.
- The doctoral examination process includes an oral examination, the *disputation*, which takes between one and two hours.

Publishing

In Germany, the doctoral title is only awarded to the researcher, once the thesis has been published. Information on publishing at the University of Münster may be found [here](#).

Cumulative thesis

Some departments at the University of Münster allow doctoral researchers to complete their doctorate by combining several essays published in prestigious specialist journals. This is called a cumulative thesis and is an alternative to a single monograph and most common in the natural sciences or medicine.

Research culture at the University of Münster

Together with all doctoral researchers, postdocs, supervisors and stakeholders in the faculties, we are shaping CERes as a place where people can come together, and where emerging researchers can play their part. And where certain things are strengthened: an awareness of social responsibility, the importance of science communication, and the opportunities which doctoral researchers and postdocs have for using their potential and their skills to benefit our society.



There are also many other opportunities to get to know the research culture at the University of Münster. One example is the annual *Münsters Wissen Frisch Gezapft* event organized by doctoral students. Researchers talk about their work - in bars and pubs. This allows you to "tap into" the knowledge of researchers at the University of Münster.

Health & well-being

Have you ever experienced mental stress during your academic work? If so, you're not alone with such an experience. Many doctoral researchers and postdocs feel a high degree of prolonged stress, e.g. as a result of increased pressure of time or work, or of uncertainties regarding employment.

CERes regularly offers a workshop on the subject of *mental health in the academic system*.

Your well-being can also be supported by what **University Sport (Hochschulsport)** and **Health Promotion in the Workplace (betriebliche Gesundheitsförderung)** have on offer.

Moreover, the Student Advice and Counselling Centre (ZSB) offers psychological counselling in German and English for doctoral researchers.

If you are working with a (chronic) illness or disability, you can investigate whether you might be eligible to compensation for such disadvantages (Nachteilsausgleich) e.g. in the form of a reduced teaching load or an extension of the time-limit on your employment. Further information can be given by the Representative Body for Severely Disabled Employees and the counselling service for staff and management.

Questions? Contact Rebecca Meier at CERes:
rebecca.meier@uni-muenster.de



The PhD representatives

The PhD representatives (Promovierendenvertretung) are a group of three elected doctoral researchers who are representing the interests of all doctoral researchers. They support doctoral researchers of all disciplines at the University of Münster on diverse issues, such as funding or supervision challenges.

They also organise informal networking events (Stammtisch, Flying dinner, Boulderling, etc.) and scientific events (doctoral researchers writing night, seminars, debates).

Sign up for the representatives' newsletter [here](#) to stay informed about upcoming events, elections, and relevant news.



Financing your doctoral studies

Most doctoral studies positions are not linked to an employment contract as a researcher. In that case doctoral researchers need to apply for an external doctoral studies scholarship or maintain themselves during the doctoral candidacy.

Support for doctoral studies scholarship application at the University

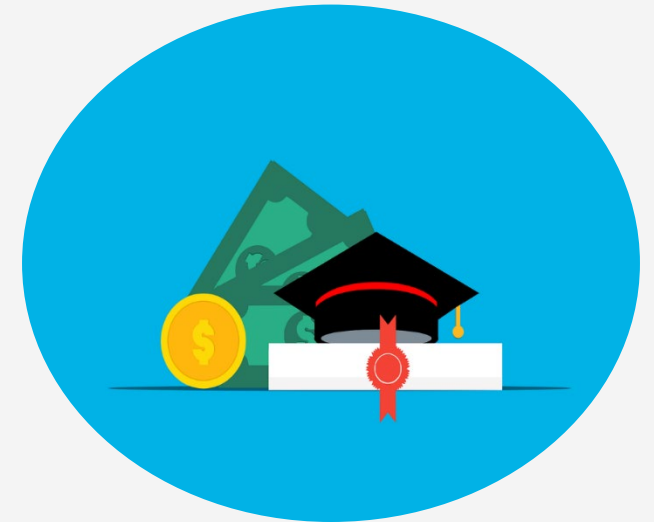
If you need some guidance in preparing your doctoral studies scholarship application, you can contact Ms. Linda Dieks from [SAFIR](#).

Grants for researchers at risk

If you are a researcher at risk (e.g. because you had to leave a country due to a war or crisis), you might be eligible for specific grants, please contact CERes for first advice.

The DAAD scholarship database

In the scholarship database of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) you will find both doctoral scholarships for international doctoral candidates and scholarships for shorter research stays abroad.



You can find an overview of the cost of living in Münster [here](#).

4. Getting started – first steps in Münster



Accommodation

Münster is a growing city with lots of students. Be persistent and patient while looking for accommodation. Network to improve your chances.

Doctoral students can apply for a room or an apartment at the [Studierendenwerk](#) (prerequisite: enrolment) or for an apartment in one of the University of Münster's [guest houses](#) (max. rental period: 1 year). As the apartments at the Studierendenwerk and in the guest houses are very popular, you should allow for a longer waiting period.

If you would prefer to rent privately, be it an entire apartment or a room in a shared flat, take a look at [wg-gesucht](#), social media, the [nadann](#) or the [housing portal](#) of the AstA of the University of Münster.

You can find more information about housing [here](#).

Need more tips? Contact Larissa Mrwa!
ceres.international@uni-muenster.de



© rawpixel.com auf freepik

Moving in and residence registration

After you arrive in Germany, you must register with the local citizens' office within 14 days and provide your address to the office. Schedule an appointment [online](#).

Where: Citizens Office
Stadthaus 1 -
Klemensstraße 10
48143 Münster

Don't forget to bring:

- Your personal ID/passport
- The landlord's confirmation for your tenancy "[Wohnungsgeberbescheinigung](#)"

You have found a place to stay in Münster? Despite all enthusiasm, keep a cool mind. When moving into your new place, please make sure you understand the contract, in particular the conditions for the deposit and any possible extra costs. Normally, there is a handover protocol – ask for it, keep your copy.

Broadcasting License Fee (“Rundfunkbeitrag”)

Every household in Germany has to pay a fixed monthly rate for public television and radio broadcasting. If you have an apartment for yourself, you will need to pay the fee. If you live in a shared flat, ask who is paying the fee, share the costs, and [register accordingly](#). Please don't ignore any post as the fees may be asked from you even retrospectively!

Visa and residence permit

Whether you need a visa – and, if so, which one – depends on your nationality, the purpose of your stay and its duration. As a rule, doctoral researchers who do need a visa should apply for one for the purposes of their study. In individual cases, a researcher's visa may be an option. More information on the topic can be found on the website of the [German Foreign Ministry \(Auswärtiges Amt\)](#) and of the [German embassy in the home country](#).

Please also take note of the rules on gainful employment which are linked to your visa and check these before you accept any job. A visa or a residence permit for the purpose of studying entitles the holder as a rule to take on part-time employment.

The visa entitles you to enter Germany and stay for a period of up to three months – or, in some cases, up to 12 months (long-stay visa). For any further stay you must apply for a residence permit in Münster (or with the authorities responsible for your place of residence).

Before you can make any application for a residence permit, you need to have registered your place of residence in Germany.

For the entire period of your stay, your living expenses (€934 per month for §16b) have to be covered through income, a scholarship or a blocked bank account.

Questions? Make an appointment with Eva Woltering!
ceres.international@uni-muenster.de



Insurances

Health insurance

Health insurance is **mandatory** throughout your stay.

As a general rule, researchers with an employment contract and their dependents are covered by statutory insurance, while researchers without an employment contract are covered by private insurance.

In the case of an employment contract, your employer will register you with a statutory insurance provider. If you would like to choose the provider yourself, you will have to notify your employer when signing the contract.

If you take out private insurance, you should compare the tariffs of different providers and make sure that all the benefits relevant to you are covered by the tariff you choose.

Personal liability insurance

In Germany, people are liable for accidents and damages they cause. Even though the liability insurance is optional, it is regarded as very important and useful. DAAD scholarships usually include the liability insurance.

Accident insurance

Accidents which cause you damages such as disability and prevent you to work can be covered by accident insurance.

Further information can be found [here](#).

Banking and taxes

In order to pay your rent, semester fees or other payments, it may be advisable to open an account. If you are employed, you will also need it to receive your salary.

Most banks offer free bank accounts for students (sometimes with an age limit). Compare the conditions and costs from different banks. Check whether the bank has conveniently located ATMs. Paying with a visa card is less common in Germany than in other countries, therefore make sure to get an EC card. It's also better to always have some cash with you, since some shops might only accept cash.

When opening a bank account bring your passport/ID card, certificate of enrolment, your residence permit card (if you already have it), your tax ID, and a confirmation of your registration in the city.

Your tax number will be sent to you via post once your address is registered. It is sent only once, so keep it forever!

If you are employed, your taxes and social contributions will be deducted from your gross salary automatically.

If you have a scholarship, you normally don't need to pay taxes.

At the end of the year, you may file a tax return to declare any expenses (e.g. costs to commute to work, childcare, etc.).

Contact the HR department if you have questions about taxes or other employment related concerns.

Pre-departure checklist

Once you have received an acceptance for doctoral supervision, you need to start preparing for your doctoral candidacy in Münster. For a smooth transition you should take care of the following things before coming to Münster.

- Documents for the enrolment: You will need *certified* copies of your diplomas, a written confirmation of doctoral supervision and, if applicable, a supervision agreement.
- Passport/Visa: Check if your passport is valid and whether you need a visa to enter Germany. If you will be employed, you might need a visa even though you do not need one to enter the country.
- Get a travel, health, and liability insurance
- Finances: sign your employment contract, accept your scholarship, or open a blocked bank account
- Look for accommodation
- If you bring along your family, check visa, school, and daycare options in advance
- Book your travel tickets (only once you have your visa)
- Get an appointment to register your address at the local citizens office (the confirmation of the address registration is required for further steps and appointments need to be booked in advance)

Upon arrival checklist

Already in Münster? Here is a list to guide you during the first days and weeks in your new city.

- Find accommodation and register your address at the [citizens office](#)
- Enrol as a doctoral student at the [student admissions office](#)
- Sign up for the [Buddy Programme](#)
- Meet your supervisor
- Get in contact with your hosting institute or the graduate school
- Familiarize yourself with the [examination regulations](#) (“Promotionsordnung”)
- Apply for a [residence permit](#) within 90 days
- Open a bank account (if applicable)
- Attend orientation and social events
- Sign up for a German course



5. Useful information



© Sabine Schneider

Medical Care



The healthcare system in Germany helps you out in many ways:

For medicine without prescription, you can ask for advice at a local pharmacy. Yet, some medicine needs prescription. Therefore, it is recommended to have a general practitioner (*Hausarzt*) for any cases concerning your well-being.

Your *Hausarzt* can send you for a further check up to the specialist (e.g. orthopedist, the cardiologist...).

To find an English speaking *Hausarzt* you may use this [website](#) and select English under “Gesprochene Sprachen” in further settings.

Emergency numbers:

Fire department/Ambulance - call 112

Police - call 110

Transportation

The most popular and fastest transportation within Münster is the **bicycle**. Make sure to purchase a bike with functioning lights and brakes. Be sure to cycle according to the rules to avoid fines. You can find many second-hand bicycles on social media, in the local newspaper [nadann](#) and on [ebay-kleinanzeigen.de](#). More information on [cycling in Münster](#).



Nearest airports:
Münster/Osnabrück,
Dortmund,
Düsseldorf, Cologne.



Cycling is not your cup of tea? Don't worry, once you are enrolled, you will be able to use regional trains and busses nationwide with your semester ticket **for free!** The semester ticket is not valid on high-speed trains (IC and ICE). You simply log in to the University of Münster's [Self-Service portal](#), download your ticket and print it.

German courses

As an enrolled doctoral researcher you can take German courses **for free** at the Language Centre (Sprachenzentrum) of the University of Münster.

You can find information on free courses [here](#). Registration is only open few weeks before the start of the courses. For most beginner courses you only need to log in with your student account. Before enrolment for advanced courses, you need to take a C-Test. For a date check here: [C-TEST](#).

The Language Centre also offers **fee-based courses** for researchers 270€ (60h).

If you are interested in more intensive-learning courses within a shorter period, private language courses may be interesting for you:

[Wissenschaftliche Internationale Partnerschaften WiPDaF e.V.](#)

[Inlingua](#)

[Kapito](#)

[Lernstudio Barbarossa](#)

[Volkshochschule Münster](#)

[Dolmetscher Institut Münster](#)

Leisure activities

Münster offers a wide range of cultural and leisure activities. Enrolled doctoral students receive discounts at theatres and museums with the cultural semester ticket. In addition to the university sports courses, there are numerous other sports clubs in the city.



Münster is also a green city and the lake Aasee and the promenade in Münster invite you to stroll and linger. A particular highlight is the weekly market, which takes place on Wednesdays and Saturdays on the Domplatz (cathedral square) in the middle of the historic old town.

Impressum

Münster Centre for Emerging Researchers (CERes)

Sabine Schneider

International Affairs

ceres.international@uni-muenster.de

July 2024

Information subject to change



CERes

Münster Centre for
Emerging Researchers