

Guideline for International PhD Students at University of Education (PH) Schwäbisch Gmünd - Frequently Asked Questions

How to do a doctorate in Germany?

Generally speaking there are two ways to get a PhD title in Germany: the so-called „Individualpromotion“ is the common path to pursue doctoral studies. In the last years structured PhD programs have become more common. Whereas the structured programs include a curriculum with given classes the individual doctoral study focuses on the dissertation project. Nonetheless PhD students can voluntarily take part in advanced methods courses.

How do I find a supervisor for a dissertation project?

The best way to find a supervisor is to get in touch with professionally and individually suitable professors directly. On the PH Schwäbisch Gmünd homepage all [departments](#) are listed to help you to identify your area of interest. If you aren't fluent in German don't hesitate to write to supervisors in English. And in case you have trouble understanding our website, a German-English dictionary might help to identify your potential research field. (e.g. www.dict.leo.org)

How do I get a topic for my doctoral thesis?

It's up to you to choose your research topic. The next step is to find a supervisor who'll look after your dissertation project. A short proposal of your project will help you to convince your supervisor.

Where can I get help for financing and funding?

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) offers a scholarship database for international [PhD candidates](#).

Where do I get a visa?

Visa regulations vary from country to country and depend on duration and purpose of your stay abroad. The German diplomatic mission in your country can give you information on visa requirements. Please note that the process of getting a visa might take a few months of time. In case you need a certificate, your supervisor can attest your intention. [The Federal Foreign Office](#) offers an overview on the topic.

What about health insurance?

Health insurance is mandatory for students (including PhD students) in Germany. Please check with your insurance company if your stay abroad is covered. There are special insurance rates for international visitors. If you need further information, the [DAAD](#) website can help you.

In which language can I write a dissertation?

Obviously, you can write your thesis in German. If you feel more comfortable to write in another language, talk to your supervisor and check if he/she agrees to a dissertation written in English or another foreign language.

How do I get along with little knowledge of German?

Most people in Germany speak, or at least understand, English and will help you to get along in your everyday life. Nonetheless the spoken language on campus is German. Please be prepared that most classes at PH Schwäbisch Gmünd are held in German. The University of Education offers some language classes for international exchange students on different levels. You can use this opportunity to get to know the language and culture of your host country and mingle with other international students. If you're interested in participating in a German course, talk to the International Office at the beginning of the semester. Contact: www.ph-gmuend.de → [International](#).

Where do I find information on accommodation?

Generally speaking, it's difficult to find housing from abroad in the free market. Therefore we recommend to apply for a room in one of the residence halls close to the campus:

- [Studierendenwerk](#)
- Junges Wohnen: <http://www.i-live-gmuend.de>,
- Private rooms for students on this [German website](#).

What about the costs of living?

The actual costs of living depend on your lifestyle and can therefore only be estimated. Currently the average student in Germany can get along with approximately 700 € per month.

What kind of status do I have as a PhD student?

You can voluntarily decide to enroll as a PhD student. Therefore you'll have to cover a small administration fee (approximately 100-150 Euros per semester) but you can benefit from student amenities (e.g. transportation). You'll find further information at the [Studierendensekretariat](#). (in German; in case you do not understand please contact the [International Office](#))

Where do I go upon arrival?

Your most important contact person is the department of your supervisor. Please make an appointment beforehand to make sure you'll meet someone on campus. This is particularly important during the semester break (lecture-free periods: winter semester: February/March; summer semester: August/September).

How can I participate in social activities?

The International Office offers a social program for international students. If you're interested in side activities ask to be added to their mailing list.

Weblinks:

- [Research Profile PH Schwäbisch Gmünd](#)
- The „[Research in Germany](#)“ website is packed with information on research. Find out more about the German research landscape, research areas and funding for scientists
- [DAAD](#) offers information for foreigners in English
- Find doctoral positions at the [PhD Germany website](#).