

FAQ about visas and residence permits of International PhDs

Advisor: Eva Woltering, International Office
Last updated: October 2026

The information provided is not legally binding; it is intended solely for guidance.

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Office for Migration and Integration Münster / Amt für Migration und Integration Münster

Question: How do I get in touch with the Office for Migration and Integration Münster?

Answer:

You can send an appointment request online via the website:

<https://www.stadt-muenster.de/aufenthaltsrecht/terminanfrage> (You can switch the page to English using the drop-down menu on the right.)

Requirement: a registered address in Münster. If you haven't yet registered your address in Münster, this is the first step you need to take before contacting the Office for Migration and Integration Münster. If your registered address is in a town other than Münster, a different immigration office is responsible for you.

Residence permit according to §16b (study) and §18d (research)

Question: What rights and obligations do the residence permits for PhD students entail, in particular Section 16b (study) and Section 18d (research)?

Answer:

A comparative overview of the various residence permits can be found, in German and English, on the website of the German Rectors' Conference: <https://www.hrk.de/hrk-international/academic-mobility-and-recognition/mobility-of-researchers/>

Extension of a residence permit

Question: When should I apply for an extension of my residence permit?

Answer:

Applications to extend a residence permit or change its purpose must always be submitted **before** the current residence permit expires, preferably about 2 months before expiration.

You can submit the application for the extension online via the following website: <https://www.stadt-muenster.de/aufenthaltsrecht/terminanfrage> (You can switch the page to English using the drop-down menu on the right.). Click on “appointment request” and in the contact form choose “application for the granting or extension of a residence permit”.

Job seeking residence permit and unemployment benefit

Question: I'd like to switch to a residence permit for job seeking and receive unemployment benefit while I look for a new position. Is this possible?

Answer:

For the duration of the residence permit, the applicant must have sufficient means of financial support. Unemployment benefit (ALG I) may, in principle, be taken into account for this purpose, and if the amount is sufficient and is paid for the entire duration, a residence permit for the purpose of seeking employment may therefore be granted.

Unemployment benefit (Arbeitslosengeld I)

It is generally possible to provide evidence of funding from ALG I to the Office for Migration and Integration (provided that the amount is sufficient).

To be entitled to unemployment benefit (German: "Arbeitslosengeld", very important: this is about "ALG I" and not "Grundsicherungsgeld"), at least the following conditions must be met:

- you need to have worked for at least 12 months within the past 30 months before applying
- the employment must have been subject to social insurance contributions, i.e. payments must have been made to the unemployment insurance scheme.

You can apply via the website of the Bundesagentur für Arbeit: <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/arbeitslos-melden/> (Website available in Germany only.)

Please click on the red button "Vorgang starten", then register as a private person and follow the process.

Important: If you have a fixed-term employment contract, you must apply as "arbeitsuchend" 3 months before your contract expires to avoid any disadvantages.

Grundsicherungsgeld (previously used terms: Arbeitslosengeld II, Bürgergeld)

This provision is generally not possible/disadvantageous to international PhD students! If an application is made for public benefits, the residence permit will not be granted.

If necessary, consult the Office for Migration and Integration on a case-by-case basis.

Hosting Agreement (Aufnahmevereinbarung)

A Hosting Agreement is generally required for a visa / a residence permit under Section 18d (research).

You can download the document on the website of the BAMF:

<https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Forschungseinrichtungen/08muster-aufnahmevereinbarung-deutsch-englisch.html>

At the University of Münster, please get in touch with the following teams for a signature of the Hosting Agreement:

In case of a PhD student (without a work contract): visa.phd@uni-muenster.de

From Postdoc-level onwards (without a work contract): welcome.centre@uni-muenster.de

Any case with a work contract: Human Resources Department / Personaldezernat

→ ***If the applicant is from a country subject to embargo, please include the result of the export control review in your e-mail.***

Important information:

We are required to verify sufficient means of funding. Therefore, please also send us proof of your financial resources (which may include, depending on the situation: an employment contract, a scholarship certificate, proof of sufficient personal financial resources e.g. in the form of a blocked bank account.)

Applying for a residence permit after visa-free entry

Question: I would like to enter Germany without a visa and apply for a residence permit once I'm there. Is that possible?

Answer:

That depends on the type of residence permit you wish to apply for and your nationality. Please take a look at the following website of the Federal Foreign Office to check whether you are eligible for visa-free entry and what other requirements apply to you:

<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/visa-service/231148-231148>

For nationals of certain countries, it is possible to apply for a residence permit for study purposes after having entered Germany without a visa. However, it is often **not** possible to apply for a residence permit for the purpose of gainful employment. This also includes the residence permit under Section 18d for the purpose of research. (Regardless of whether funding is via a scholarship or a work contract.)

In addition, you should take into account that it may take some time (a few months) to receive a residence permit. Until then, you may not be able to travel, or you may encounter problems when wishing to re-enter the country.

You should therefore carefully consider, depending on your plans, whether it makes sense for you to enter Germany without a visa.

Researchers and Students (REST) Directive

Question: I am an international PhD candidate and am currently pursuing my PhD at a university in the EU. I would like to come to the University of Münster for a visiting research stay. Is that possible via the Researchers and Students (REST) Directive?

Answer: Whether a mobility via REST is possible depends on several factors.

If you have a residence permit for **study purposes**, please visit the following website:

<https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/MobilitaetEU/MobilitaetStudent/mobilitaet-student-node.html>

If you have a residence permit for **research purposes**, please visit the following website:

<https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/MigrationAufenthalt/ZuwandererDrittstaaten/MobilitaetEU/MobilitaetWissenschaftler/mobilitaet-wissenschaftler-node.html>

As the host institution, we will handle the mobility notification. Please email us all the necessary documents listed on the respective website.