

# Handbook for international doctoral candidates

Winter 2023/24

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## Herzlich Willkommen – Welcome!

Dear international doctoral candidates,

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 centralized and decentralized measures and programs.

Aside from your department, cluster or graduate school, the Graduate Centre 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 candidates,  
  
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 PhD programme here and we look forward to support you during the next exciting years.

As a doctoral candidate 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. The Graduate Centre supports doctoral candidates 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 Graduate Centre Team*



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Lena Penner, Eva Woltering, Sabine Schneider  
Graduate Centre, International Affairs

# The University of Münster



about 4000 doctoral candidates



700-800 graduations per year

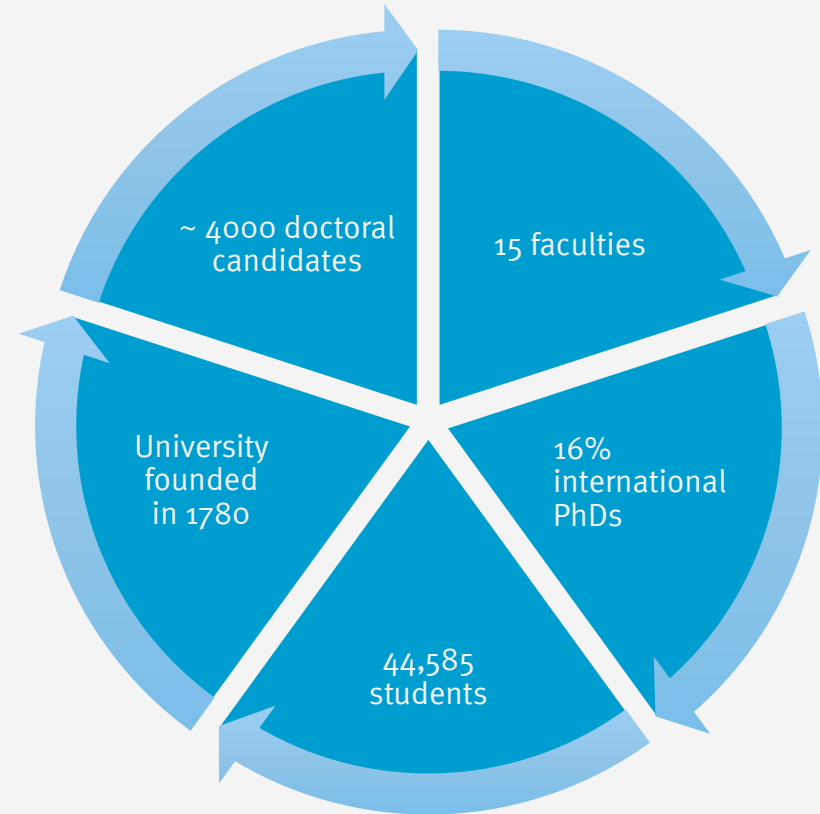


30 structured doctoral programmes

2 clusters of excellence



holistic support



Source and further statistics

## Your PhD at the University of Münster

- You will either pursue your PhD individually under the guidance of a professor (your supervisor) or within a structured programme (graduate school)
- Normally, the PhD is pursued in full-time
- On average, it takes 4,5 years to complete the PhD
- Some doctoral candidates are employed by the university, others have an external scholarship, or use their own funds to finance the PhD
- The requirements on courses, the thesis, the defence, etc. can be found [here](#)
- For research or study related matters you should contact your supervisor or the graduate school
- If you have other questions, feel free to contact the [Graduate Centre](#)

Check out our [onboarding video](#) and make sure to **familiarise yourself with the doctoral regulations** (Promotionsordnung)!



## Your new roles, rights, and duties

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

First, most doctoral candidates are enrolled so they are **members of the university** (students). Second, all doctoral candidates have a **supervision agreement** with a supervisor (researchers under individual guidance). Some doctoral candidates 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 candidate 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 the Graduate Centre.

## Academic key dates and public holidays

Academic Year	
Winter Semester	1 <sup>st</sup> October – 31 <sup>st</sup> March
Enrolment 15 <sup>th</sup> August – 15 <sup>th</sup> November	
Summer Semester	1 <sup>st</sup> April – 30 <sup>th</sup> September
Enrolment 15 <sup>th</sup> February – 15 <sup>th</sup> May	

Public Holidays	
03.10.23	Day of German unity
01.11.23	All Saints
25. & 26.12.23	Christmas
01.01.24	New Year
29.03.24	Good Friday
01.04.24	Easter Monday
01.05.24	Labour Day
09.05.24	Ascension Day
20.05.24	Whit Monday
30.05.24	Corpus Christi



Source: Wikimedia Commons



# Dissertation and defence

Doctoral candidates 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 PhD 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 candidate.
- 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 candidate, once the thesis has been published. Information on publishing at the University of Münster may be found here: <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Publizieren/> [de]

## Cumulative thesis

- Some departments at the University of Münster allow doctoral candidates 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.

Need to prepare for your defense? The Graduate Centre offers the workshop **thesis defence training** in English.

## Good Scientific Practice

Based on a Senate resolution, the University of Münster issued a code of ethics on 7 January 2002, entitled "Rules of good scientific practice", which obliges researchers and academic staff of the University to exercise fairness and honesty in academic work. Generally, the rules of good scientific practice are:

1. to conduct the work according to academic and scientific conventions
2. to provide correct information
3. to safeguard intellectual property
4. to do nothing that hinders or undermines the research activities of other academics.

Further [information](#) and [here](#).

The Graduate Centre offers **seminars** on good scientific practice.



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## The Graduate Centre

The Graduate Centre is the central point of contact for current and future doctoral candidates and postdocs at the University of Münster. Offering a wide range of support services, the Graduate Centre provides individualised advice, training in career advancement and planning and networking opportunities.

Internationalisation is key, therefore we regularly organise [the European Doctoral Summer School](#) with our partners University of Maastricht and University of York.



© S. Schneider

Our ecological community garden “[InchbyInch](#)” aims to let you grow your roots in Münster and Germany.

The project [MünsterXchange](#) aims to connect international doctoral candidates with life-experienced citizens of Münster – building bridges across cultures and generations.

Sign up for our [welcome events](#) at the beginning of each semester!

# The PhD Buddy Programme

Starting a PhD can be challenging for everyone. Apart from the new academic environment, international doctoral candidates need to find their way in a foreign country and often without speaking the German language. The Graduate Centre is committed to connecting and supporting early-stage researchers across disciplines. Through the PhD buddy scheme we aim to facilitate peer-to-peer support at the beginning of a PhD journey. We will match new doctoral candidates to PhDs who have completed their first year.

## A buddy ...

- is a doctoral candidate – international or German – who has completed the first year in Münster
- welcomes you and some other new doctoral candidates at the beginning of the semester
- has experienced the ups & downs of starting a doctoral candidacy and knows what you are going through
- listens to your concerns and questions and signposts you to people at the university who can help
- introduces you to peer networks

[More information and registration.](#)



## The Graduate Centre's upcoming events

Would you like to improve your academic or transferable skills? Would you like to get to know people from other faculties? Here is a selection of events that are particularly suitable at the beginning of the doctoral candidacy.

- 12.10.2023 **Group Consultation: Orientation at the University for International PhDs**
- 20.10.2023 **Kick-Off for new international doctoral candidates**
- 27.10.2023 **PhD Walk & Talk Sessions: PhD, work-life balance, well-being**
- 09.11.2023 **Staying in Germany as a career choice**
- 13.-14.12.2023 **Good Scientific Practice (natural & life sciences)**



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Have a look at the Graduate Centre's events  
and sign up!

## PhD representatives



The PhD representatives (Promovierendenvertretung) are a group of three elected doctoral candidates who are representing the interests of all PhDs. They support doctoral candidates 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, Bouldering, etc.) and scientific events (PhD writing night, seminars, debates).

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



## Münster's knowledge freshly tapped!

Every year a group of PhD candidates organises a science communication event so that you can “tap” the knowledge of researchers from the University of Münster!

**Scientists talk about their work – in bars and pubs.** In their talks, you can learn about interesting issues from various fields of research – including the new life sciences and natural sciences, as well as the humanities and social sciences. Following the lectures, everyone has a chance to chat and discuss with each other.



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

# University services

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.



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## Financing your PhD

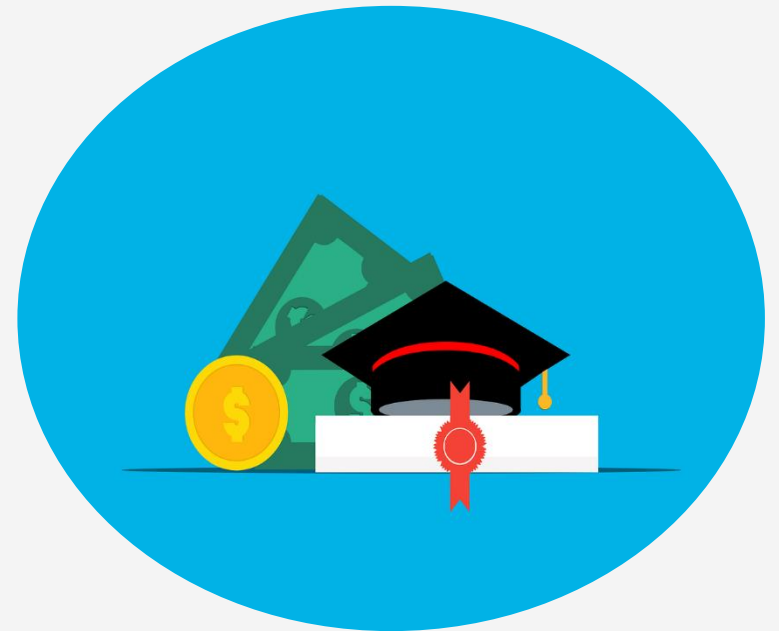
Most PhD positions are not linked to an employment contract as a researcher. In that case doctoral candidates need to apply for an external PhD scholarship or maintain themselves during the doctoral candidacy.

### **Support for PhD scholarship application at the University**

If you need some guidance in preparing your PhD 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 the Graduate Centre for first advice.



## Getting started – first steps after arrival



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## 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"

Yay, you have 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!

# Enrolment

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 PhD is in biology you need to contact the PhD examination office first and make sure you have all required documents (the requirements depend on the PhD regulations and the corresponding [enrolment regulations](#)).

## **Are you a visiting PhD?**

You have the opportunity to enroll for a maximum of 3 semesters. Please contact the Graduate Centre for support.

## Enrolment

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. 342,64 €)
  - Go to [www.uni-muenster.de/stu](http://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](#).

## Banking & Taxes

You will need a German bank account to pay your rent or university fees but also to receive your salary if you are employed.

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 than in other countries, therefore make sure to get a 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.

## Visa and residence permit

If you are a doctoral candidate from a Non-EU country, you need a visa to enter Germany. The visa allows you to enter the country and is commonly valid for 90 days. In most cases, you will need to get your visa transformed into a residence permit. Please request an appointment [online](#) before your visa expires and keep in mind that you need to bring several documents to this appointment.

Most doctoral candidates will apply for a visa/residence permit with the purpose of study (§16b). In a few cases, a visa/residence permit with the purpose of research (§18d) is an alternative.

### Study visa (§16b)

If none of the points at the right apply to you, you need a student visa irrespective of how you finance your PhD (scholarship, self-financed, employment at WWU)

### Research visa (§18d)

- You are a visiting doctoral candidate enrolled for a PhD abroad
- You are employed for research that is not part of your PhD
- You have been invited for a research stay before starting the PhD

Confused? Ask the Graduate Centre for advice:  
Eva Woltering  
[internationals.gc@uni-muenster.de](mailto:internationals.gc@uni-muenster.de)



## Insurances

### Health insurance in Germany

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

As an employee, you are eligible for public health insurance. Your employer will register you. If you would like to choose the provider, you will have to notify your employer when signing the contract.

Unless you or your partner are employees, and hence eligible for public health insurance, you will have to take up private health insurance.

If you have a valid health insurance from another EU country, you might be eligible for public health insurance. However, it is quite expensive and in most cases not necessary.

### 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 scholarship holders receive this insurance automatically.

### Accident insurance

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

Further information [here](#).

## Life in Münster



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## Cost of living

Estimated costs:

- ✓ € 300-600 for a room
- ✓ € 100 for health insurance
- ✓ € 160 for food
- ✓ € 65 for leisure activities
- ✓ € 24 for books
- ✓ € 48 for clothing
- ✓ € 17,50 broadcasting fee (compulsory)
- ✓ € 14,50 for telephone/internet

€ 934 per month are approx. needed for living expenses. However, the costs can vary depending on your personal expenses.

Please also keep in mind, that you have to pay a social contribution fee every semester (about € 343).

Also, the costs right after your arrival are higher: e.g. the deposit for your room, buying/renting a bike, kitchen equipment etc.

# Accommodation

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

PhDs at Münster University may apply for an apartment:

- in the student halls of residence (enrolled PhDs)
- or in the University's Guest Houses (maximum of the rental period: 1 year)

If you would rather rent privately, be it the whole apartment or a room in a shared flat, search on:

- the BlackBoard of the students' union executive committee (AStA) of the University of Münster
- Check our **guide** with tips on **how and where** to look in the housing market.

Temporary (emergency) accommodation:

- Student emergency accommodation
- PhD Hospitality Network – PhDs and PhD supporters provide a space for a few days or weeks within their house

# 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 finer. 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.



© Gunnar A. Pier



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 in North Rhine-Westphalia 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.

If you want to travel beyond North Rhine-Westphalia, you can upgrade your semester ticket to the **Deutschland-Ticket** (no IC and ICE) for 15,54€/month here.

## German courses

- As an enrolled doctoral candidate you can take German courses **for free** at the Language Centre (Sprachenzentrum) of the University of Münster
- The Language Centre also offers **fee-based courses** for researchers 270€ (60h).
- Find information of 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](#).

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](#)

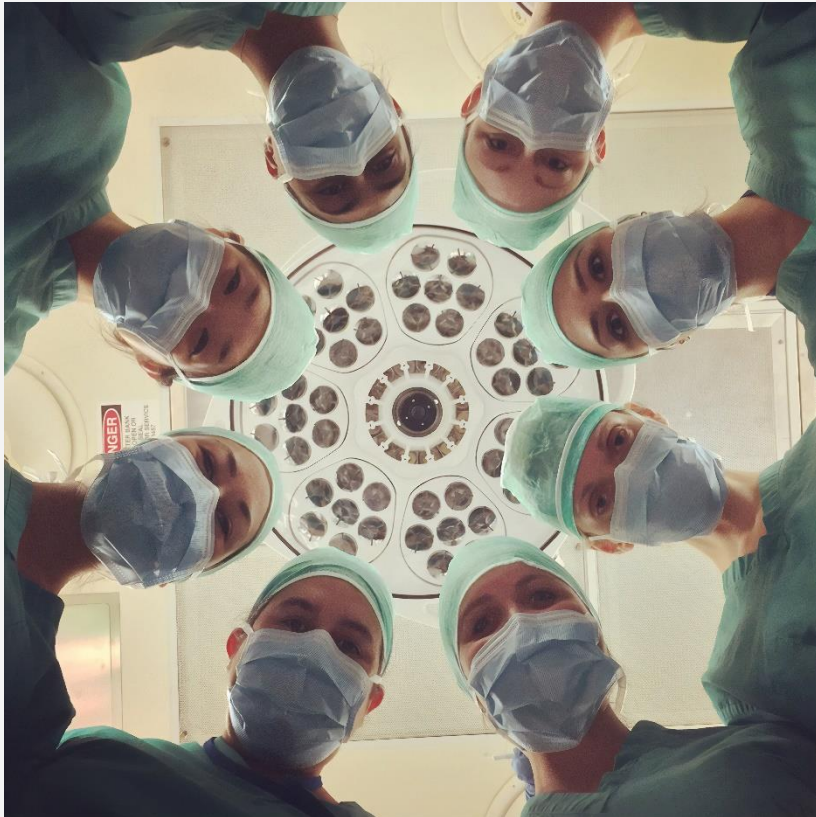
[Kapito](#)

[Lernstudio Barbarossa](#)

[Volkshochschule Münster](#)

[Dolmetscher Institut Münster](#)

## Medical Care



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The health 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 “Fremdsprachenkenntnisse” in further settings.

**Emergency numbers:**

Fire department/Ambulance - call 112

Police - call 110

## Leisure time

### How to get informed about upcoming events

[nadann](#)

[City of Münster](#)

Social media

### Cinema & Theater

[Cineplex](#)

[Cinema & Kurbelkiste](#)

[Theater](#)

### Best of Münster

[Botanical Garden](#)

[LWL Museum](#)

[Local market on Wed & Sat](#)

Detailed and regularly updated information: [restaurants](#), [shops](#)



## 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 PhD student at the student admissions office
- Sign up for the PhD 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
- Attend orientation and social events
- Sign up for a German course



## Impressum

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October 2023  
*Information subject to change*



Gefördert vom DAAD aus Mitteln des Auswärtigen Amtes (AA)

DAAD



Bundesrepublik Deutschland  
Auswärtiges Amt