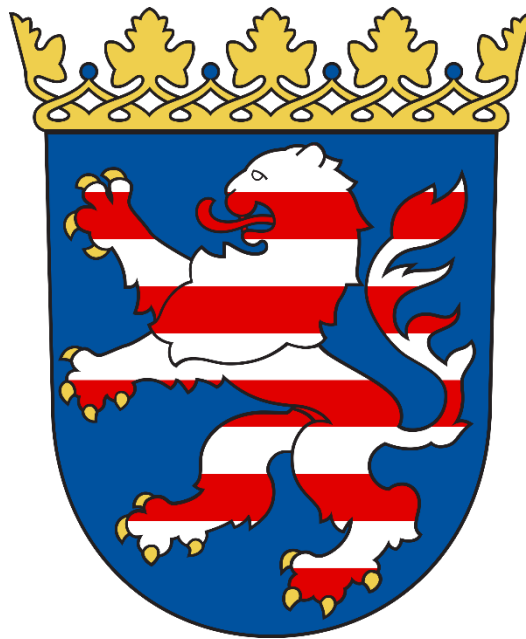

Hessen-Wisconsin Exchange Program

Student Guide



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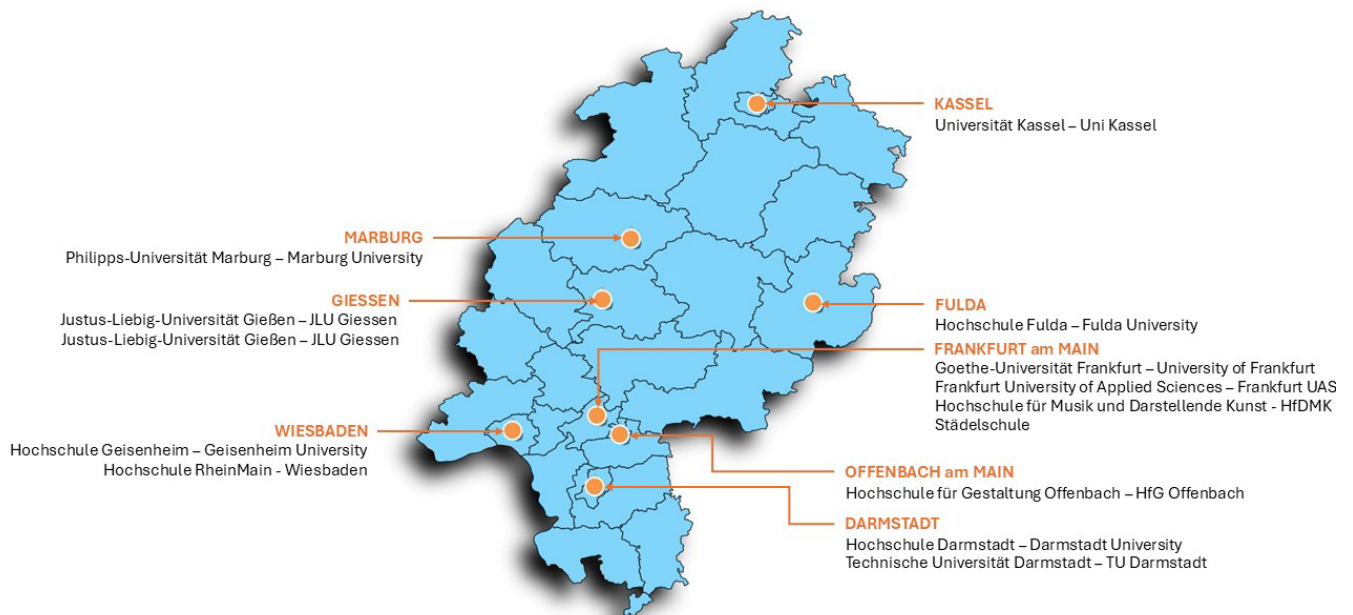
Welcome to the Hessen-Wisconsin Exchange!

The Hessen–Wisconsin Exchange Program lets students from Wisconsin study in **Hessen, Germany** for a **semester, a full year, a short-term summer or January program, or with a directed internship**. We have fourteen universities found across Hessen, including schools in cities like **Frankfurt, Marburg, Kassel, and Darmstadt**. Live among half-timbered houses, medieval churches and fairy tale castles – or in a cosmopolitan city like Frankfurt, Hessen's major international financial hub.

You can:

- Take classes taught in **English, German, or both**
- Learn or improve your **German language skills**
- Experience German culture while earning credit toward your degree

This guide explains how the program works and what to expect. You do **not** need to understand everything right away. Use this guide as a reference before, during, and after your exchange.



“Experience culture and history while in the heart of modern Germany.”

Information Sources

The best source of information on the opportunities available through the Hessen/Wisconsin exchange is the [Hessen Ministry of Education website](#).

This guide for Wisconsin students supplements that website and aids in navigating information across the many Hessen institution websites.

The German Education System

Germany has several types of colleges and universities:

Universities

- Focus on theory and research
- Good for subjects like science, law, and humanities

Universities of Applied Sciences

- Focus on hands-on learning and careers
- Strong in business, engineering, and social work

Arts & Music Academies

- Focus on fine arts, design, music, and performance

New Type of University

- Focus on specialized programs
- Small, focused and hands-on classroom setting

You will take **modules**, which are what Germans call **courses**.

<p><u>Universities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technische Universität Darmstadt • Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main • Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen • Philipps-Universität Marburg • Universität Kassel 	<p><u>Universities of Applied Sciences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hochschule Darmstadt • Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences • Hochschule Fulda • Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen • Hochschule RheinMain
<p><u>Academies of Music and Arts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main • Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach 	<p><u>New Type of University</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hochschule Geisenheim University • Städelschule

Academic Calendars

Semester dates *vary by institution type*. Traditionally, the German semesters start and end later than our semester, so unless you are taking part in the IUSP (International undergraduate Study Program), you will have to plan accordingly (usually students apply for the *Sommersemester* (our spring semester equivalent) or for the full academic year.

MAIN SEMESTERS

- **Wintersemester (WS):** October through February
- **Sommersemester (SS):** April through July

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

- **IUSP (Marburg):** Follows the US Academic calendar
- **IWU:** Short-term Winter University programs
- **ISU:** Short-term Summer University programs
- **EIEM:** European Internship program
- **Semester in Social Work:** Focused semester study
- **Semester in Business:** Focused semester study

Important German Terms You Will Hear

Faculty

A department or college. For example, in Germany the “Engineering Faculty” is the U.S. equivalent of a “Department of Engineering”. Likewise, in Germany, “Faculty” doesn’t refer collectively to the people teaching your courses.

Module

A course

Professor Title

Address your professor as “Prof. Dr. (last name)”. (Yes, use both titles together!)

Seminar

Discussion-based class

Schein

Proof that you completed a course and exam

Counseling vs. Advising

“Counseling” in Germany is “Advising” in Wisconsin.

ETCS Credits

European credit system (not the same as U.S. credits). Typically, two (2) ECTS equals one (1) US Credit.

Campus

German universities are not typically centralized on a campus, as classrooms, libraries, cafeterias, administrative buildings, offices and student accommodation may be found in various locations throughout the city. In many cases students may need to rely on public transportation as well. Students are therefore members of a much larger community than they may be accustomed to. Extracurricular activities, intramural sports, gym memberships, and even student accommodation are through city or student organizations which are not part of the university.

Intensive German Language Study Options

Intensive German for exchange students may be offered over one or more of the following time periods:

- During the semester as a class
- As a supplement of the international office
- As part of the January or Summer short-term programs
- Pre-semester programs (which vary by university but are between 4-6 weeks)

Choosing Hessen Exchange Programs

For semester study, short-term programs, Internships, and special programs, you will have to access our database through the Via-TRM Platform.

To do this, you will follow the link to the main Hessen page and create an account.

Semester & Year Study Options in English

Hessen institutions offer:

- [full degree programs in English](#)
- [Hessen's Academic Programs Chart](#) (Individual courses in English)

See "Practical Information for Semester & Year Exchange" for detailed information on coursework and full programs taught in English.

Contact your prospective host institution to find out which courses exchange students are eligible to take and under what circumstances.

Semester & Year Study Options and Practical Information by Institution

Course choice, academic calendars, orientations and other practical information can be quite different at each institution in Hessen. Each Hessen institution has its own website where this type of information can be found, just as each UW System institution has its own website. Programs may be accessed via the UWSS Via-TRM site listed in the section, "Application."

Short-term Study Options and Practical Information by Institution

During the summer and in January Hessen Institutions offer short-term study programs through "International Universities". These month-long (or less) intensive programs focus on the hosting German University's academic specialization and provide German language courses at the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. The International Summer and Winter Universities, ISU or IWU for short, also incorporate regional and cultural programming and excursions to introduce students to Germany. What's more is that these programs offer the opportunity to study with peers from all over the world, offering a global perspective.

Most seminars are taught in English and are open to both undergraduate and graduate level students.

Language courses allow for some flexibility PROVIDED YOUR HOME CAMPUS PRE-APPROVES ANY COURSE LEVEL CHANGES YOU MAKE. If, within the first weeks, you feel your course is too demanding, or not challenging enough, WITH PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE NEW COURSE they may change to a level lower or higher than they were placed. Without prior approval, however, the new course may not transfer to your home institution.

All enrolled students pay tuition for six credits to their home university regardless of the number of credits earned through the experience. In exchange, UW System students do not pay the program fee to the host university but receive everything covered by the program fee as announced by the individual host universities!

Academics

Course Design

When choosing courses, keep course design and level in mind. The following terms will help you understand the nuances of the German higher education system:

Vorlesungen

(Lecture)

Like our “pit” classes, these are large group lectures. These courses do not require previous knowledge of the subject. Normally there are no exams or papers, so you must be sure to ask your professor how he or she would like you to earn your *Schein* (explained elsewhere in this document) when you begin the semester.

Tutorien

These are tutorials that complement the *vorlesungen*. In them you can discuss the material covered. Some focus particularly on cultural studies, and others focus on grammar, translation, etc.

Proseminare

These are based on the more general *vorlesungen* and are more in-depth.

Hauptseminare

These are advanced courses geared towards third- and fourth-year students.

Übung (Exercise / Project Course)

These courses involve more interaction and active participation on the part of students.

Einführungsseminar (Introductory Seminar)

Something like “Introduction to... (e.g. Social Work) courses in the UW.

Seminar (Seminar)

Require dialogue with the instructor and independent work.

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

ECTS, or the European Credit Transfer System, is used across Europe to calculate course credit. This system is quite different from the U.S. system and considers classroom hours, study hours, project hours and potentially other hours which may be spent on the course outside of class.

Your home institution will decide the number of transfer credits awarded for each course you take in Germany. Be aware that the number of transfer credits you receive for courses taken in Germany will be substantially lower than the number of ECTS credits you receive for the same course in Germany. Traditionally, the exchange rate has been approximately 2 ECTS to 1 US Credit.

Course Load

The Hessen-Wisconsin Exchange requires full-time enrollment (12 credits) while studying for a semester abroad. Short-term programs require half-time enrollment (six credits). Online options may be approved for a three-credit equivalent.

Proposed Study Program & Learning Agreement

When you first apply to study in Hessen, you will be asked to complete and submit a **Proposed Study Program**. Hessen administrators use this information only to be sure that you are choosing a reasonable set of courses which *may potentially* be offered over your study period.

Upon arrival in Hessen, you must choose courses and may be asked to complete a **Learning Agreement**. Because German institutions don't have a centralized course enrollment system, this Learning Agreement is your guarantee to both your host institution and your home institution that you plan to attend, complete and take exams for the courses as indicated on the form.

If required by your host institution, the agreement must be signed by your home institution study abroad advisor and the designated person at your host institution. You should keep a copy of this Learning Agreement for yourself and may have to submit a copy to your home institution International Office of Transfer Student Coordinator as well.

Course Selection

As in the U.S., students may only choose courses for which they are academically and linguistically prepared. This means that, as in the U.S., you may not register for courses if you do not meet the course pre-requisites. When reviewing course lists, pay special attention to any prerequisites based on prior learning requirements or on number of completed years of university.

While the German system is set up to allow for course registration just prior to the first day of classes, to ensure proper transfer of credit to your home institution and to remain on track for graduation, you will need to know what courses you may be able to take abroad much earlier.

The best course selection strategy is as follows:

1. Prior to selecting a 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice host institution, use past course schedules as posted on the web to figure out whether the course array you need is, in general, offered. It's best to ultimately choose an institution which could potentially offer more course options than you need so that if specific courses aren't offered over your term abroad you don't find yourself without backup options. It's never a good idea to rely on the offering of one or more *particular* courses.
2. Depending on your home campus policies, at this point you may need to complete a process to secure prior approval for transfer of courses you plan to take abroad. You may be asked to secure prior approval for more courses than you plan to take to provide flexibility when you are abroad.
3. 2-3 weeks prior to leaving for Germany, begin checking for the semester course schedule. If the course schedule is available, begin researching course options. Check to be sure that pre-approved courses are being offered. Know the course descriptions and which courses are your first, second, and third choices. If you find added courses of interest, you may be able to get these pre-approved for transfer before leaving for abroad (depending on the timing!).

4. If the course schedule isn't available prior to your departure for Germany (it's highly likely that it won't be), plan to use your time during orientation (*Einführungswoche*) in Germany to do this research. During this time a peer advisor or an advisor from the international office at your host institution may also help you design your schedule (timetable) and find courses right for exchange students.

Course Enrollment

Germany has extremely strict laws related to students and the sharing of data, which leads to significant differences in the administration of education from the U.S. system. For example, registering for courses is quite different in Germany. This process will call for a bit of flexibility on your part as you simultaneously manage both course enrollment and course transfer between two vastly different systems.

1. You will not be "registered" for any classes prior to arriving in Germany. Bring a list of all pre-approved courses with you to Germany so that you remember what to take!
2. At the beginning of each semester, you can begin taking more courses than you plan to complete (you may have to sign in or register directly with each professor, depending on the institution). This is a fantastic opportunity to get to know your professor, to work out your course schedule, and to really know whether a course will interest you. Use this time to communicate with your home campus in relation to courses which were not pre-approved for transfer earlier.
3. Then, after a specified period (check with your host campus international office on this), you may be able to narrow down your course choice.
4. Once you have decided which courses you will attend for the rest of the semester (or by your host campus's specified deadline), **submit your Learning Agreement** to the International Office at your host institution (or follow alternative procedures if no Learning Agreement is required). You should also ask about the procedure for obtaining transcripts and dropping courses at this time.
5. At some point during the semester, you will need to **enroll or register to take your final exams** – you will enroll for each exam individually. This step isn't optional! If you don't enroll to take the exams, you won't be allowed to sit for the exams and you won't receive credit for your courses.

There typically is no online registration system, although some schools have begun to move in that direction. If you find a course that requires registration directly with the professor, email the professor or speak to him or her **by the first day of classes** and introduce yourself as an exchange student. If you experience difficulties getting the courses you need, visit the advisors in the International Office at your host institution for help.

Although this system is different than what you are used to, remember to stay flexible. In the end you may appreciate the fact that this registration system allows you to find a schedule that best fits your needs and helps you to find professors with styles of teaching and accents that work for you.

Exams

Exams given in Germany may be written exams or may be oral exams. If a professor offers an oral exam and you would prefer a written exam, you *may* be able to negotiate a written exam with the professor. “May”, however, is the operative word here! Final decisions on how an exam is given are always made by the professor.

Course Transfer

To transfer courses from Germany to your home institution, you will need to collect and submit a *Schein* to your *HOST* institution international office for each completed course. Courses for which you don’t collect and submit a *Schein* to your host international office ARE NOT TRANSFERRABLE.

Schein & Transcripts

Just as in the U.S., courses can be taken for credit or not for credit. Unlike in the U.S., however, it is the student’s responsibility to understand what must be completed, both in terms of workload and in terms of testing, to receive credit for a particular course.

To ensure that you receive credit for the courses you take, **introduce yourself as an exchange student (*Austauschstudent*)** to your professors on the first day of classes or, if not possible on day one, within the next few days. Discuss the work you will need to complete to receive credit for the course. Make it clear that what you are working toward is receipt of a ***Schein*** for the course.

A *Schein* is documentation that shows that you have both completed the coursework and taken the final exam for a *specific course*. *Scheine* are then collected from each professor by the student, submitted to the International Office by the student, and transcribed onto an official transcript.

Remember – if the host institution you attend doesn’t have a central course registration system, then there is no automated system for recording coursework on a transcript. Collecting your *Scheine* and submitting them to the International Office is ultimately your responsibility; and your ability to transfer courses to your home institution depends on this. **If you leave Germany without having completed this crucial step, it may be impossible to receive a transcript.**

The International Winter and International Summer Universities don’t use the *Schein* system; transcripts are available to students at program end without going through the process described above.

You may not be able to earn a *Schein* for your pre-semester German language courses. If this is the case, these courses also cannot be entered onto your official transcript. In cases where a *Schein* is not given, you will either receive **a certificate with a grade or a certificate of attendance with no grade**. Your home institution will decide whether or how courses which cannot appear on the German transcript may be transferred back to your home institution.

Please note that some institutions are moving away from the *Schein* system during other study periods as well. If this is the case at your host university, be sure that you understand at the beginning of the study period how to obtain a record of your courses, grades, and credits at the end of your study period.

BEGINNING-OF-SEMESTER PROCESS

1. Be aware of procedures on your home campus for transfer of courses. For example, you may have to provide supporting documentation such as course descriptions or a syllabus. Whether you think you'll need this or not, ALWAYS KEEP THE SYLLABUS YOU RECEIVE ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS AND BRING THIS BACK TO THE U.S. WITH YOU. You don't want to find out too late that this is the only place where information that may be needed upon your return is found.

END-OF-SEMESTER PROCESS

1. If you take a pre-semester German language course, and IF a *Scheine* can be earned in this course, collect your *Scheine* from your German language instructor at the end of this course. Don't wait until the end of the full semester!
2. At the end of the full semester, visit each individual instructor to collect your *Scheine*; you may need to collect quite a these depending on the number of courses you're in.
3. Take all your *Scheine* to the International Student Coordinator/ Advisor at your host institution and request that a transcript be mailed to your home campus. You should provide the CORRECT mailing address for the CORRECT office; don't just guess! If you aren't sure who receives transcripts for transfer credit on your home campus, ask your home campus international office!

IN GENERAL, *SCHIEN* WILL INCLUDE:

- Student name
- Course title
- Type of course, lecture or seminar (Vorlesung/Seminar)
- Professor's name
- Year and semester
- Number of hours per week
- How the Schein was earned, exam, homework, presentation (Klausur, Hausarbeit, muendliche Pruefung)
- Course grade

Application

Program Eligibility & German Language Requirements

Each UW System institution oversees screening and recommending applicants. All applicants must:

- be a degree-seeking student at the undergraduate or graduate level at a University of Wisconsin System college or university;
- have **completed one year of full-time study** (or 24 credits) at the time of participation;
- be in good academic standing with a **minimum GPA of 3.0 GPA**;
- for applicants taking all courses in German, have sufficient knowledge of German, per guidelines established on the applicant's home campus, to successfully complete German-taught classes;
- for applicants taking all courses in English, have sufficient knowledge of German, as determined by the applicant, to feel comfortable in a German-speaking environment;
- be at least **18 years old** at the time of exchange;
- **be a U.S. citizen**;
- meet all other requirements as determined by the applicant's home institution.

For International Summer University (ISU) & International Winter University (IWU) applicants, no German language proficiency is needed.

Application Process

1. Go to the UWSS Via-TRM webpage: wisconsin.via-trm.com/authV2/welcome
2. Follow the steps to create your account. Please **use a private email** to set up your account. DO NOT use your university email, as this will cause issues in the application process.
3. **"Explore Programs"** to find the program or programs that meet your requirements. You may search by university term, dates, subject areas, and program type.
4. Once you chose your program from the **"Dashboard,"** click on the program to begin your application.
5. On the landing page, select the amber button entitled, **"Apply."**
6. This will bring you to a page to **select your specific application term**. Select your desired term from the dropdown menu.
7. Click the amber button entitles **"Start Application."**
8. You will be directed to fill out the "Traveler Form. Please fill in **every blank**.
9. Download the "HWXApplication.pdf"
10. Under "My Next Step," click the box that says, "I understand."
11. In the upper right corner, click the amber box that says, "Next."
12. You will be directed to choose an alternate program in case your expected program is full. Please select only if you are willing to go to a different program in the Hessen exchange.

13. Finally, click the amber button in the upper right corner that says, "Submit." This will send a nomination request to the Wisconsin Hessen Coordinator.
14. Fillout the HWXApplication.pdf and return it to your home university International Study Abroad Advisor your home institution's specified deadline. Your advisor shall review your document and discuss any added documents you may need to submit.
15. When your Advisor is confident in your application, said advisor will submit everything on your behalf.
16. Hessen considers all applicants simultaneously and makes placements all at once. Therefore, late applications are not accepted. Once you are placed, you will receive an acceptance email and instructions on further application requirements directly from your hosts. Acceptance emails are typically not sent earlier than the dates listed below. Some institutions may send emails later than this. To find out when acceptance emails are sent from your host institution, contact your host institution.
17. Application deadlines are as follows:

October 15 th , Noon CST	IWU, Sommersemester, and Spring IUSP (Marburg), EIEM
March 15 th , Noon CST	ISU, Wintersemester, Fall IUSP (Marburg), EIEM

18. Complete all additional requirements by the deadlines stated in your host institution acceptance email. These documents/responses will be due either directly to your host institution or to your home institution international office; as each UW System institution manages this differently, be sure to check with your international office well in advance.
19. All correspondence related to further program detail will come directly from your host institution.

Timing the Student Exchange

Be sure to indicate the correct term on your application, or you may be enrolled for the wrong period AND delay the application process!

	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Germany</u>
Fall Semester	→	Wintersemester (WS)
Spring Semester	→	Sommersemester (SS)
Fall Interim; J-term	→	International Winter University (IWU)
Summer	→	International Summer University (ISU)

For example, if you intend to study over summer but enroll in Sommersemester, your application will be sent to the office that accepts semester-long exchange students rather than to the International Summer University office. Your application will be delayed because of this – and you may be processed for the incorrect period.

Before choosing a term, CONSIDER THE TERM START AND END DATES FOR YOUR PARTICULAR INSTITUTION! Except for the IUSP, the German WS runs late into the Wisconsin spring semester; therefore, it is often not possible to begin a one-semester-only exchange (except IUSP) in fall. Students exchanging in fall must plan to graduate at the end of fall semester, must exchange for a full year, or must take spring semester off.

Connect with Returning Peers

[Young Ambassadors](#) are undergraduate students from North America who have recently studied in Germany. These students are dedicated to promoting study in Germany and have been selected to answer your questions. Find someone who studied where you want to go or who specializes in your field and ask them whatever you want to know about study or research in Germany!

Working in Germany

Work permits for paid positions are normally issued only to people with completed degrees, making the prospect of obtaining a work permit by people without degrees extremely unlikely. You should not plan to work while you are studying in Germany unless you are studying through a partner that offers a formal internship for credit.

Tuition, Fees and Program-related Expenses

Tuition and Fees

Hessen-Wisconsin Exchange students pay tuition to their home institution and do not pay tuition to their host institution.

- The minimum number of credits on which tuition is paid for a semester program is **12**.
- The minimum number of credits on which tuition is paid for a January or summer program is **6**.
- Wisconsin students do not pay segregated fees, differential tuition, municipal fees, United Council fees or other similar fees to their home campus. Instead, ***Wisconsin students pay the equivalent of these types of fees directly to their German host institution.***

Program-related Expenses

Use your host institution's web pages and the cost sheets below to estimate your expenses.

- Keep in mind that costs differ from institution to institution. The cost estimates given below are not exact estimates for YOUR program; these are generalized, approximated costs for Hessen institutions. **You may need to spend considerable time on your host institution's web pages to get an exact estimate.**
- Keep in mind that exchange rate calculations can and often do vary radically over time (even over short periods of time). Complete your initial cost estimate using an exchange rate that is 10%-13% higher than the interbank rate available from xe.com.
- If you plan to study abroad for one month or less, update your estimates just prior to travel using the exchange rates in effect at your time of travel.
- If you plan to study abroad for a semester, update your estimates just prior to travel using an exchange rate that is 5%-8% higher than the interbank rate in effect at your time of departure.
- If studying abroad for longer than a semester, update using an exchange rate that is again 10%-13% higher than the interbank rate in effect at your time of departure.

The following worksheet has been generalized to cover study at any institution in Hessen. **Fees at the institution you choose may be higher or lower than the fees listed below. These worksheets are designed to get you an approximated cost; these will not be exact.** Estimated costs as shared by Hessen institutions may change without notice:

Estimated Program Cost Worksheet

Estimated Expenses in U.S. Dollars for _____ months

\$	100	UWO Application Fee (payable to home university)
\$		Home Campus Application Fee
\$		Home Campus Program Fee
\$		Home Campus Tuition
\$	()	Reduction for segregated fees and other similar fees
\$		CISI Insurance (\$35/month)
\$		Immunizations
\$	200	Passport & Pictures
\$		Airfare (add excess baggage fees if necessary)
\$	0	Visa (U.S. citizen rate)

\$ Subtotal of Estimated Expenses in U.S. Dollars

Estimated Expenses in Foreign Currency (European Euro = €) for _____ month

€	50	Transportation to/from the airport in Hessen (approx.)
€	110	Residence Permit (U.S. Citizen rate)
€		Refundable housing deposit; approx. €500 depending on the university; may be payable to the Studentenwerk in advance or on arrival.
€		Accommodation (approx. €250/month on average; 1st month rent payable on arrival)
€		Meals (approximately €250/month on average)
€		Pre-semester German language course (optional)
€		Local Transportation and/or bike rental (if available) NOTE: student fees at SOME institutions include a local - not high speed - bus and train pass which covers most of the state of Hessen.
€		Cell phone deposit and rental (if available)
€		German Sozialbeitrag Student Fees (vary depending on the university; averages €200; not needed for summer/January-only programs)
€		German Health Insurance (needed for semester study; averages € 78/month)
€		If attending IUSP Marburg: There is an added fee which is payable in advance directly to Marburg. Part of this fee includes some of the above line items. See the IUSP web site for details.
€		Personal Expenses, including cell phone (€225/month on average; add to this if you plan to travel outside of your host city often)

€ Subtotal of Estimated Expenses in Foreign Currency

\$ Subtotal of Estimated Expenses in Foreign Currency converted to U.S. Dollars

\$ Total Estimated Expenses in U.S. Dollars (add the two sections in yellow above)

Getting to Hessen

Visa

A visa is an endorsement or stamp placed by officials of a foreign country on a U.S. passport that makes it possible for the bearer to visit that foreign country. U.S. citizens in possession of a valid passport do not need to apply for a visa to enter Germany.

If you are participating in an internship, research or other employment directly after arrival in Germany, a visa (which includes the work permit) has to be issued by the German Consulate in advance of arrival in Germany because it is not legal to start working in Germany before having the obligatory work permit.

Residence Permit (semester & year)

If Traveling for 90 Days or Fewer

- U.S. citizens who study in Germany for 90 days or fewer do not need a visa to enter Germany and will not need to apply for a Residence Permit once in Germany.
- Non-EU Citizens may or may not need a visa to enter Germany. Use the German Missions in the United States [Visa Navigator](#) to research who needs a visa and who does not.

If Travelling Greater than 90 Days

A National Visa / Residence Permit is required for all study programs longer than 90 days. A list of required application documents is available on the German Mission in the U.S. [Residence Visa / Long Stay Visa](#) web page (navigate to “Preparing Your Application”, “Study”).

- U.S. citizens who plan to study in Germany for 91 days or longer do not need a visa to enter Germany but **MUST** apply for a *Residence Permit*. U.S. citizens apply following either OPTION 1 or OPTION 2.
- For Non-EU citizens, use the German Missions in the United States [Visa Navigator](#) to research who needs a visa and who does not.
- Applicants may be required to provide documentation in addition to what is listed on [Residence Visa / Long Stay Visa](#); applicants should be proactive in asking whether additional documentation might be required as early in the process as possible.

All students who plan to study for a semester or longer (+90 days) must apply for a Residence Permit to study in Germany. There are two ways to apply:

OPTION 1

- Students who have a *specific* housing assignment, substantiated by a housing contract sent by the German host institution well in advance of travel may **apply to the German Consulate in Chicago for a Residence Permit before leaving the U.S.** However, you will need a minimum of 3-5 months to complete the process, and you will have to appear at the German Consulate in Chicago **IN PERSON**. To apply prior to travel, see the [German Missions in the United States](#) for process details and to [schedule an appointment](#). . Because visa requirements change from time to time, [review the official visa application checklist](#) prior to attending your visa appointment or traveling to Germany.

OPTION 2

- Most U.S. citizen students enter Germany on the *visa waiver program* (without applying for a visa in advance of travel). The student will be responsible for locating the *Ausländerbehörde* (you will see it referred to as the Foreigner's Authority or Immigration Office). This is where you will have to submit the application for a residence permit.
- Students must carry the proper documentation with them when they travel to Germany and **apply for a Residence Permit just after arrival**. If possible, require that your students bring all documents required for the Residence Permit to your office for your review prior to departure.
- Staff in the host school international office will guide students through the application process.

Residence Permit Application Checklist

You will need these items whether applying PRIOR to travel or AFTER arrival in Germany. If applying upon arrival in Germany, please be sure to pack these items in your carry-on:

ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS FOR YOUR RESIDENCE PERMIT:

1. **Residence Permit Application Form.** You can download this from the website of the *Ausländerbehörde* or obtain it in person at the office. (Be sure to locate the closest *Ausländerbehörde* to your host university).
2. Your **passport**. Must have:
 - have at least two blank visa pages;
 - have been issued (not extended) within the last ten years; and
 - be valid for at least 3 months past the expected final departure date from Germany.
3. Your student visa (if applicable).
4. One **passport-size picture**.
5. **Proof of financial means.** Depending on your situation, this could be:
 - See the National Visa for Students application checklist, linked from [Residence Visa / Long Stay Visa](#), for details on the **amount of money** a student must have at their disposal and the option to prove financial means using a **blocked account**.
 - There may be other ways in which a *particular* applicant may provide evidence of sufficient funds; request information from the Consulate in Chicago for other ways in which an applicant might meet the requirement.
6. Proof of a scholarship.
7. **Proof of financial support** from your parents or a sponsor.
8. **Health insurance** certificate.
9. **Certificate of enrollment** or letter of approval from your university (if applicable).
10. **Proof of enrollment** in a German preparatory language school (if applicable).
11. **Proof of conditional acceptance** into a German university (if applicable).
12. **Residence Registration Certificate/Contract**.

Booking Your Flight

Program dates listed on Hessen web sites may be the dates you should plan to arrive at and leave from your university OR the dates on which your classes begin and end. You may not know your official arrival date until just a few months or, in some cases, just a few weeks prior to travel. Hang in there and don't jump the gun!

- Don't book your flight until you have received official acceptance directly from your host in Germany (this is in addition to the official acceptance you may receive from your home campus) AND until after your host has sent your official arrival and departure dates to you.
- Don't plan to arrive in Hessen prior to your program start date or leave from Hessen after your program end date, unless you are prepared to find and pay for housing on your own.
- If your hosts haven't yet confirmed the official arrival date and you're feeling a bit panicky about booking your ticket, contact staff at your host institution to ask about arriving on the first day of your housing contract (but not on a weekend as there won't be anyone to get you a key). You may have housing contract dates before you have the official program start date.
- If you have housing available to you prior to your program start date or are prepared to find and pay for your own housing, arriving in Germany a day or two ahead of the beginning of your program could be immensely helpful. It is challenging to fight jetlag while trying to keep up with the information offered in orientation. Many of the Europeans attending do not have problems, but for those coming from across the pond, an adjustment period is advised. If you are taking part in an IWU or ISU, it is also a fantastic way to get some pre-program travel in, as the rigorous academic schedule does not allow for much time on weekends for independent travel.

Still waiting on your program start and end dates? Your best course of action is to remind yourself that while in Germany you'll be doing as the Germans do and you may as well get a head start on this before you travel. Your official program start date will arrive in plenty of time for you to book your airline ticket, even if it feels to you as though you're receiving this at the 11th hour.

Getting from the Airport to Your Host Institution

Students are responsible to secure travel from the airport to their host institution on their own.

If a Buddy Program is offered, students who request a buddy AND plan with their buddies well in advance can be met at the train or bus station in their HOST CITY (not at the airport). The buddy can often help you get from the train or bus station to your accommodation and get checked in.

Public transportation in Hessen is mainly by bus or high-speed rail; the type of transportation available to you will vary based on your destination and the time of day of travel. Do your research well in advance so that you know how you will get from the airport to your host city. Know where to buy a ticket; how and when to confirm your ticket; how, when and where to board your train or bus; and during what hours the transportation you are relying on runs. Plan to arrive in Germany on the earliest flight possible just in case there is a flight delay, or you find that it isn't as easy to use the public transportation as you had anticipated. Arriving early keeps you from having to solve transportation issues in the dark and gives you time to make mistakes, miss trains & busses and still get to your destination on time.

Have a back-up plan in place before you travel! Your back-up plan should include knowing what hotels are available near the airport or train station (probably in Frankfurt), how much they cost, what the phone number is (as dialed from within Germany) and how to hail a taxi (have the address written down and handy just in case you need to show this to the driver). Be aware that the hotels directly across the street from the main train station in Frankfurt, while cheap, are also in a condition (and in a neighborhood) which may be intimidating to most travelers. Have enough EURO on you to pay for a taxi a bit further away from the station and to stay in a decent hotel.

What to Bring to Hessen

- Your passport, with an expiration date of a minimum of three months PAST your intended RETURN DATE from Germany
- Your official Letter of Acceptance from your HOST institution (you may be asked to present this to border officials when entering Germany).
- Your official Letter of Acceptance from your HOME institution (this may be useful documentation at the border when entering Germany).
- A document showing that you have a minimum of EUR 500 per month for the number of months you plan to spend in Germany. Acceptable documentation includes one or more of the following: scholarship or grant letter, a financial aid statement, or a bank statement (you are almost certain to be asked to present this to border officials when entering Germany).
- ALL documentation needed to apply for your Residence Permit (if you didn't apply for this prior to travel). See the section on "Residence Permit" in this guide for details.
- Copies of all correspondence, including rooming information, resource guides and receipts, you receive from your host institution.
- Contact information for both your HOST and your HOME campus. Have this on your person when you travel; you may need to include contact information on your customs declaration form, which you complete while on your international flight to Germany.
- At least four passport photos; you'll use these for your Residence Permit application (if you haven't already applied for and received your Residence Permit) and potentially for various other documents and IDs when you arrive in Germany.
- Your student ID card from your HOME institution.
- Cash in Euros (many banks can provide you with this)
 - Enough money *in cash* to pay the first and last months' rent as well as your housing deposit. Refer to your cost estimate worksheet for totals.
 - Additional cash for transportation and other needs from the airport to your destination in Hessen and your first few days' expenses. Again, refer to your cost estimate worksheet for totals and carry extra just in case you need to cover an extra hotel night due to flight delays or missed trains/busses upon arrival.

Student Life in Hessen

Buddy Program

Most Hessen institutions have a peer advisor program called a “Buddy Program” which pairs students from Wisconsin with Hessen students, some of whom have studied in Wisconsin. This program is free for any Wisconsin student who is interested.

Your Buddy can correspond with you prior to travel, potentially pick you up from the airport (if you are studying in Frankfurt) or train station (in your host city), help you check-in to your accommodations, and help you through your first week at your host university.

If you hope to be met at the airport or train/bus station, you must clearly communicate your travel itinerary to your Buddy WELL IN ADVANCE OF TRAVEL so that you both can discuss a location and specific date/time to meet in advance. Your Buddy will need a copy of your flight itinerary so that if a flight is delayed or cancelled, they are aware. Bring your Buddy’s contact information with you when you travel so that if you are delayed, you can let them know.

Registering in Person at Your Host Institution

When you arrive at your host institution, you must go to the International Office to announce your arrival. There will be some forms you will need to fill out, and you will need to bring with you:

- An official passport-size photo
- Your passport
- Your official Letter of Acceptance from your HOST institution (*Zulassungsbescheid*)
- Your proof of UW System insurance (your card, printed from the CISI portal, and a copy of the full policy)
- Receipts for any fees you pre-paid to your Host Institution or for your housing
- Your official Letter of Acceptance from your HOME institution

Once you register you will receive your student ID card (*Studienausweis*) and coupons that prove your student status at the host institution (*Studienbescheinigungen*). The Student ID Card and your passport will be your “ticket” (*Semesterticket*) for free public transportation and discounts at many stores, restaurants, and bars.

If you are staying for more than one semester, you will need to re-register at the beginning of each semester that you stay at your host institution. You may have to pay additional fees if you forget to re-register.

Insurance

If participating on a semester- or year-long program...

You will have both Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) insurance through UW System and German health insurance through Hessen. **Both are mandatory and both policies offer a unique set of insurance coverage**; the CISI policy extends well beyond standard health insurance.

You should familiarize yourself with the details of your CISI insurance coverage prior to traveling.

Staff or students in the International Office at your host institution will help you obtain the appropriate German Health insurance during orientation week; however, it is ultimately your responsibility to enroll in a German health insurance program and to cover the monthly premiums while you are in Germany. You will receive more information about obtaining German insurance from your host institution.

If participating on a January or summer program...

You should familiarize yourself with the details of your CISI insurance coverage, available through your home institution international office, prior to traveling.

Housing (semester & year)

Student accommodation is available in student residences run by the Association of Student Affairs, or *Studentenwerk*. Typically, your host institution will have *Studentenwerk* contact information on their web site.

The student residences are quite different than the residence halls and apartments you are used to, and they vary greatly from campus to campus. Typically, you can expect to have a single or shared bedroom with a shared bathroom, shower, TV area, and kitchen. Student residences tend to be similar to apartments, but with many more (potentially as many as eight) bedrooms. There is no need to gather a number of roommates to rent; residents rent a bedroom directly from the landlord and have access to the shared areas of the apartment.

On some of the Hessen campuses, *Studentenwerk* cannot arrange for housing for students older than 30 years of age. Please check with the local International Office if you are older than 30.

Following formal acceptance into your program, you may receive a *Studentenwerk* accommodation request form from the International Office at your host institution, or you may need to contact the *Studentenwerk* directly. In either case, **you must reserve a room in advance by the specified deadlines.**

Host Family Stays (semester & year)

A few programs offer homestays, where you live in the home of a “host family” for the duration of your program. Homestays are coordinated by the International Office at your host institution.

Meals (semester & year)

The *Studentenwerk* also coordinates the cafeteria (called the *mensa*) on campus, where you can buy inexpensive meals at government-subsidized prices. (between 2,5 to 5€ per meal)

You will not have to buy a meal plan or eat in the mensa; the mensa offers only pay-as-you-go meals and you may eat there as often or as little as you like.

When the mensa isn't open, or if you prefer to eat elsewhere, there will of course be small shops, grocery stores, and vending machines where you can purchase food or groceries. Most accommodations will include a small kitchen; however, pots, pans, and kitchen utensils may or may not be provided.

Entertainment

Many Hessen institutions offer extra-curricular learning opportunities like field excursions and cultural experiences. Take advantage of these opportunities!

On your own, there will plenty to keep you busy outside of your classes. Watch or even take part in sporting leagues (long-term study programs only) and events, visit museums, festivals, gardens, parks, restaurants and cafes, and become involved in campus activities.

Excellent public transportation makes exploration around your community, Germany and other European countries easy. Take advantage of the many opportunities available and enjoy your time in Hessen!

Social Connections

Talk to German and American students who have already participated! Log in or set up an account to use this to get connected to current and past Hessen-Wisconsin participants from both sides! Search for and request being added to: "Alumni Hessen-Wisconsin Academic State Program."

www.facebook.com - or - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2548137992086699/>

Outbound Virtual Meetup Dates

After you've been accepted into the program and before your departure, we have set up a virtual meeting schedule for all participants. Here, you can discuss any last-minute questions with the program coordinator and potentially meet other UW System students who you are traveling and/or attending your program/university. This is a wonderful way to complete your preparations.

Meeting dates will be as follows:

Fall/Wintersemester	Second Thursday in April	4:00-5:00pm
January/IWU	Fourth Thursday in October	4:00-5:00pm
Spring/Sommersemester	First Thursday in November	4:00-5:00pm
Summer/ISU	First Thursday in April	4:00-5:00pm

Student's will be contacted by email through the Via-TRM program email that you provided during your application process. A link to the meeting will be provided at that time.