




Information on

Language Requirements and Tests

for Higher Education Institutions in Baden-Württemberg, Germany

 Thank you for your interest in learning German. It is spoken by 101 million people around the world and the most widely-spoken language in the EU. It's the second most important language in the sciences. And it's the language of almost a fifth of the books in the world. Those are just a few of the many good reasons to learn German. 

Language Requirements for German higher education institution admission

 The language requirements at higher education institutions/universities depend on the course type and its language(s) of instruction:

International Degree Programmes:

These programmes are mostly held and taught in English. If you enrol in an International Degree Program, you will most likely be exempt from taking a German language proficiency test. You can then gain adequate German language skills by enrolling in parallel German language courses. Instead, a basic prerequisite for anyone wishing to join an international degree course is proof of English language proficiency. This varies from TOEFL or IELTS to the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency but depends on the institution.

Other Degree Programmes:

Applicants wishing to study courses in German need to find out which German language proficiency test is required or recommended at the university of their choice. You will generally be required to take a German language proficiency test - "Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang" (DSH) or "Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache" (TestDaF). You will be exempt from these tests if you:

- have passed the Deutsches Sprachdiplom (German Language Diploma); Level II
- have passed the Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (Central Advanced Test)
- hold the Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (Intermediate German Language Diploma)
- hold the Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom (Advanced German Language Diploma)
- have passed a Major or Minor Language Certificate issued by the Goethe Institute
- have passed a Level II Language Certification issued by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK)
- hold an Upper Secondary Level Test Certificate issued by the Goethe Institute



Other possibilities for gaining exemption from the DSH or TestDaF are if you have gained your “Abitur” at a German school, or if you wish to study in Germany for only one semester (certain universities also tolerate two semesters without the DSH). At some universities, however, exemption is only granted for exchange students or students of German language and literature studies. Many universities demand a language qualification as a matter of principle. 🇩🇪

German language proficiency tests: DSH and TestDaF

🇩🇪 Both examinations, DSH and TestDaF, furnish proof that your command of German is adequate for successful completion of a course of study at a German university or institute of higher education. They test your ability to understand scientific and academic texts and lectures, to take notes on their contents, and to express yourself orally and in writing with respect to a course-related topic. You may take the DSH and TestDaF without prior attendance at a preparatory course. Nevertheless, in many cases attendance at such a course is recommended.

The DSH

Many higher education institutions expect foreign students to sit the DSH as a requirement for admission to a full course of academic study. As a rule, the DSH is taken at higher education institutions in Germany three to four weeks before the semester begins. The exact dates are set by the higher education institutions themselves. The institution to which you are applying for a study place will advise you of the next round of examination dates (generally at the beginning of the semester).

Many higher education institutions allow you to take the examination at no cost. Some institutions do charge a fee of around 30€ to 60€.

The DSH consists of two parts: Written exams and an oral exam. The oral exam tests the following skills: Understanding, speaking and commenting. In addition, you will be tested on whether you can respond appropriately in a conversation on study-related contexts. The written examination lasts from three to four full hours and covers the following examination sections:

- Listening comprehension and use of the language from a listening text
- Reading comprehension and use of the language from a reading text
- Text production based on given details
- Comprehension and use of structures used in the language of science and study

Note that questions, tasks and assignments will differ from institution to institution as the individual universities are themselves responsible for setting the exams within a certain framework of examination regulations. It is therefore very important that you make sure that you ask the higher education institution of your choice to send you a specimen set of its examination questions. As a rule a DSH which you have taken and passed at a German higher education institution within the scope of the examination framework will be recognised by other institutions.



The test result is expressed in three levels: DSH 1, DSH 2 or DSH 3. A pass achieved at DSH 2 level or better counts as proof of sufficient German language skills for admission to or matriculation in any degree programme.

If you fail the DSH, many universities will require you to apply for a place on a preparatory course. At other universities you are automatically entitled to a place on such a course if you failed the DSH at this particular higher education institution. Please check the local examinations regulations for further details.

Further information is available from the higher education institution at which you would like to commence your studies or from the Fachverband Deutsch als Fremdsprache: www.fadaf.de.

The TestDaF

The TestDaF is a standardised language test assessing linguistic performance within the context of university life at an intermediate to advanced level. Within the scale of the European Framework of Reference the TestDaF comprises the levels B 2.1 (ALTE level 3) to C 1.2 (ALTE level 5). The TestDaF has been developed for candidates with a considerable knowledge of German (e.g. after approx. 700 hours / teaching units). The TestDaF examination may also be taken as a placement test and can be taken any number of times.

Examination fees range from 90 € to 110 €. The exact amount will be determined by your Test Centre. Currently the TestDaF is administered five times a year. Examinations are carried out in [Test Centres](#), licensed by the TestDaF Institute, worldwide; all instructions and questions are in German.

The TestDaF examines the following four language skills in separate subtests:

- reading comprehension
- listening comprehension
- writing
- speaking


Based on the scores achieved in each of the subtests, the TestDaF provides a differentiated linguistic profile of the applicant.

The TestDaF measures several levels of language performance. Each candidate's scores are aggregated to determine the candidate's performance as to one of the following levels:


- TDN 5 - TestDaF-Niveaustufe 5 (TestDaF level 5)
- TDN 4 - TestDaF-Niveaustufe 4 (TestDaF level 4)
- TDN 3 - TestDaF-Niveaustufe 3 (TestDaF level 3)
- TDN 5 is the highest level. A score below TDN 3 shows that within this subtest the candidate has not yet reached the lowest level measured by the TestDaF.



If you pass the TestDaf at a minimum level of 'TDN 4' in all four sections of the examination it will count as proof of the ability to study with unrestricted admission or enrolment for all courses of study and university degrees. Universities are also free to admit students with examination results below "TDN 4". In fields of study where neither teaching nor learning is done in German but, for example, in English, exceptions to these rules are possible and candidates may be admitted with lower scores, including scores under TDN 3 in one or more subtests. Information on the university specific admission rules is available at the Academic Registry or the "International Office" (Akademisches Auslandsamt) of your university.

For more information as well as for literature on the test please visit the web site:
<http://www.testdaf.de> (German only). You may also contact the TestDaF-Institute via email:
info@testdaf.de 

Test preparation

 If a German language proficiency test is required for admission, you should definitely take German courses in your home country or in Germany in order to prepare for the test.

Abroad:


Abroad, German language courses are offered by the [Goethe Institutes](#) and by many universities (e.g. summer schools). Simply ask the DAAD Lectors working at universities in your home country. They will be able to help you find an appropriate language course.

If no good language courses are available nearby, you can also enrol in a web-based, online distance studies course. Language courses offered by [Deutsch-Uni](#) online specifically prepare students for academic studies in Germany. You can find a list of the German language courses offered by German universities and by non-university course providers on the [homepage](#) of the Professional Association of German as a Foreign Language (Fachverband für Deutsch als Fremdsprache).

In Germany:

Many German universities offer special German language courses to help students prepare for their studies. Simply ask the International Office at your German university whether such courses are offered at your institution. Furthermore, numerous public and private language schools offer German courses, including the Studienkollegs and the Goethe Institutes. The local evening school courses (Volkshochschulen) also often offer quite reasonably-priced courses, their quality however varies.

If you do not come from an EU or EEA country, or from one of the other few countries whose citizens do not need a visa, then you will certainly need a visa to attend a language course in Germany. Please take note of the following:

A "Language Course Visa" (Sprachkursvisum) is only valid for the length of your language course. It cannot be converted into a Visa for Educational Purposes (Visum zu Studienzwecken). After completing your language course, you have to leave Germany again. If, after completing the language course, you immediately wish to follow this up by taking up a course of studies, you need to obtain a "Student Applicant Visa" (Studienbewerbervisum). 



Helpful links and information sources:

Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache: <http://www.testdaf.de>

Fachverband Deutsch als Fremdsprache: www.fadaf.de

Goethe Institute – Learning German: <http://www.goethe.de/lrn/enindex.htm>

Deutsch Uni : <http://www.deutsch-uni.com/gast/duo/info/index.do?do=index&lang=en>

DAAD – Learn German: <http://www.daad.de/deutschland/deutsch-lernen/13856.en.html>

www.study-guide-bw.de



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Updated: July 2010

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Baden-Württemberg

The German Southwest.