Just Arrived
A Guide for International Students

www.th-koeln.de/international
Note:
The subsequent information has been compiled as carefully as possible. Changes may be made at short notice as a result of legislation and the corresponding regulations. That is why we ask for your understanding of the fact that no guarantee can be made regarding the accuracy and completeness of the contents.
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www.facebook.com/International.Affairs.TH.Koeln
www.instagram.com/thkoeln_international/
www.twitter.com/IA_at_THKoeln
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- Get to know your Fachschaft (Faculty Student Association) (Brochure »Getting Started«)
  
  www.th-koeln.de/getting-started
Visa

It depends on your citizenship, the length of your stay and the purpose of your stay whether or not you are required to apply for a visa as a prospective international student.

Please note that TH Köln only issues electronic letters of admission, which are valid without signature and stamp.

You can apply for a visa through the German Embassy or the German Consulate in your home country.

Further information regarding visa applications and required documents can be found on this website:

🌐 www.th-koeln.de/visa

⚠️ Important – Apply early!

The process of applying for a visa can take weeks or even months. That is why we advise you to begin as soon as possible. Unfortunately, TH Köln does not have the authority to influence or speed up the visa issuing process at the embassy, consulate or relevant immigration office in Germany.
Accommodation

**Student dormitories**
The most convenient and economical housing option in Cologne, Gummersbach and Leverkusen is oftentimes accommodation in a student dormitory. The Kölner Studierendenwerk (KSTW) is responsible for allocating dormitory rooms to students.

The KSTW operates 90 dormitories with more than 5,000 rooms. However, more than 104,000 students study at various universities in Cologne, so that demand is much higher than the actual supply.

You should therefore apply as early as possible for a dorm room as the waiting time might be up to three semesters. You can do this online via the website of the Kölner Studierendenwerk.

Please note that you will receive an e-mail from KSTW once every month after you have completed your online application. In this e-mail you will be asked whether you are still looking for a place in a dormitory. You must respond to this e-mail and confirm that you are still interested; otherwise you will no longer be considered for the application process for a dormitory place.

Please note that TH Köln does not own any of the dormitories and hence cannot influence the allocation of dorm rooms.

[www.kstw.de > Wohnen > Change language into English > Online application](www.kstw.de)

**Private housing market**
In Germany, students often prefer to live together in shared apartments called 'WG' for the German word »Wohngemeinschaft«. Several students live together in one apartment and split the rental costs. Each roommate has his or her own room. Shared rooms such as the bathroom, kitchen, or even a living room are used on a communal basis. Many students in Cologne prefer to live in a WG because of relatively high rent costs and strong competition for housing in the city.

In Germany, rent is usually paid every month directly to the landlord from your bank account. Please note that many landlords may also require a deposit as a first payment. A deposit can be as high as up to three months’ rent. When you move out and the lease expires, it will be repaid unless the apartment is damaged.

We recommend that you visit all apartments personally and conclude a lease contract or sublease. Never transfer money from abroad before you have seen the accommodation and signed a written contract.

You can find a wide range of offers for apartments and shared apartments on the following websites:

- [www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de)
- [www.wohngemeinschaft.de](http://www.wohngemeinschaft.de)
- [www.immobilienscout24.de](http://www.immobilienscout24.de)
- [www.kalaydo.de/immobilien/Mietwohnungen](http://www.kalaydo.de/immobilien/Mietwohnungen)
Public broadcasting fee
In addition to the regular costs of living, such as electricity, water and Internet, students are required to pay a public broadcasting fee (“Rundfunkbeitrag“ in German) for the use of German public television, radio and online services. The monthly contribution is €17.50 and must be paid by every household. International students must also pay this contribution. You can find all the information you need on this website:

🌐 www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome/

† Important - Cologne has very little affordable living space.
Make sure to start looking for accommodation as early as possible. Please apply not only for a dormitory at the KSTW but also look for alternatives. We also recommend that you take advantage of offers outside of Cologne’s city center and your place of study. Please note that TH Köln cannot provide any accommodation for students.

Kölner Studierendenwerk also maintains a database with private offers for rooms:

🌐 www.kstw.de > Wohnen > Privatzimmerbörse

You can find detailed information about accommodation on the website of the Department of International Affairs:

🌐 www.th-koeln.de/accommodation
Health Insurance

All students are legally obliged to provide evidence of health insurance for Germany. In Germany, there are two kinds of health insurance, statutory / public and private health insurance. When you enroll, you have to decide whether you want statutory or private health insurance.

This decision is binding for the duration of your studies. Every student who has the opportunity to be accepted into statutory health insurance should use this option in order to be covered in the event of illness, a doctor or hospital visit or, if applicable, a pre-existing illness.

If you decide to take out private health insurance, we strongly advise against opting for the cheapest tariff.

Please note that travel health insurance is not sufficient for this purpose, it only provides coverage for entry and the first few days in the country.

You can find more information about health insurance on the following website:

www.th-koeln.de/health-insurance-for-internationals

Please note that the student health insurance only applies up to your 30th birthday. After that, you have to take out statutory or private insurance for your studies.

Social Security Agreement

In most cases, EU/EEA citizens and citizens from Switzerland can remain insured in their home country during their studies. This may also apply to citizens from countries that have concluded a social security agreement with Germany.

For more information, please visit our website:

www.th-koeln.de/health-insurance-for-internationals
At TH Köln

**Enrollment for exchange students**
In your letter of admission, you will find important information about your exchange semester at TH Köln (e.g. course of study, duration, campus and contact details of the departmental coordinators). Most of the enrollment already takes place digitally via Mobility Online before your arrival. After downloading the letter of admission, you can upload your health insurance certificate as a first step (p. 8). You will then be guided by us step-by-step through the process via Mobility Online.

www.th-koeln.de > International > Incomings > Exchange Students > Enrollment for Exchange Students
Enrollment for degree-seeking students
Admission and enrollment will be carried out by the Office of Student and Examination Services. You will receive your letter of admission electronically via TH Köln’s online application platform.

It contains the following information:
– whether your enrollment has to be done in person or by mail,
– when your deadline of enrollment ends,
– what documents are required for your enrollment, and
– the contact details of the Office of Student and Examination Services

@ www.th-koeln.de/enrollment

Semester fee
All students of TH Köln – including exchange students – have to pay a semester fee of approximately € 280. This fee has to be paid each semester before the re-registration deadline. Please note that a payment in cash is not possible.

Re-registration
You are required to re-register for the following semester in order to remain enrolled. This is usually done by paying the semester fee. In some cases, the Office of Student and Examination Service may ask you for missing documents, such as proof of internship or a language certificate, for your re-registration. Please submit these documents before the re-registration deadline.

If you have not transferred the semester fee before the re-registration deadline, a late fee of € 17.50 will be charged. Please note that in the case of an international bank transfer, the extra fees for this international transfer must be paid by you.

Re-registration deadlines:
– Winter semester: July 10
– Summer semester: January 10

Detailed information on the composition of the semester fee, the payment modalities, the exact amount as well as the re-registration can be found in the letter with your MultiCa and on the website of the Office of Student and Examination Services.

www.th-koeln.de/re-registration
MultiCa – Your student-ID card

You will receive your student-ID card by mail once you are successfully enrolled. When you have transferred the semester fee, you must activate your student-ID card at one of the validation stations on campus. These can be found in every building of TH Köln. You will receive an imprint specifying the period in which your student ID card is valid. The validation must be repeated every semester after re-registration.

You will keep your MultiCa for the entire duration of your studies.

The student-ID card of TH Köln is a multifunctional card - MultiCa for short. It includes the following functions: library card, cashless payment device in all student cafeterias, copy card, ID card for exams.

Your VRS and NRW ticket

The semester fee also includes a ticket for all public transportation (such as buses, trams, S-Bahn, Deutsche Bahn’s regional express trains) throughout North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). You have to generate the NRW-Ticket yourself and print it out in DIN A4 format or carry it with you on your smartphone. To generate the ticket you need your matriculation number, which you will find on the front of the MultiCa under your name.

A video tutorial on how to generate the semester ticket can be found on our website:

www.th-koeln.de/getting-started

Please find instructions on how to generate the NRW ticket on the AStA’s website of TH Köln:

www.asta.th-koeln.de/semesterticket

You can print your personal ticket via this website:

www.ots-nrw.de

In the VRS area, you may take one additional person or bicycle with you free of charge. This rule applies from Monday to Friday after 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. and all day on weekends and public holidays. In addition, you may take 3 children aged 6-14 years with you on weekdays from 3 p.m. and all day at weekends and on public holidays, as well as any number of children under 6 years of age every day. Please note that these rules only apply in the VRS area.
KVB – Bike Use
Students of TH Köln can rent the KVB-Bikes every time for free for 30 minutes. You just have to register with your email-address!

Registration:
1. [https://secure.nextbike.net/kg/de/koeln/registrierung/](https://secure.nextbike.net/kg/de/koeln/registrierung/)
2. Register with your email-address
3. You will receive an email from nextbike
4. Validate your email address
Registering your place of residence

If you plan on staying in Germany for more than three months, you will need to register your new place of residence at the registration office of the city of Cologne. Please make sure that you do so within two weeks after your arrival. If you move during your stay in Germany, you have to inform the registration office about your new residence and street address.

You will require the following documents for registering your place of residence:

- valid passport including visa / residence permit
- confirmation form signed by your landlord, in German »Wohnungsgeberbescheinigung« (The form is available at the registration office.)

www.th-koeln.de/international > Incomings > Studying and Living in Germany > After your Arrival
There are several registration offices in Cologne – you are free to go to whichever one you like. You can make an appointment via the online system of the city of Cologne.

If you live in Gummersbach, Leverkusen or Hürth, you must contact the local town hall or registration office since every city has its own administration and service centers.

www.th-koeln.de/international > Incomings > Studying and Living in Germany > After your Arrival

Applying for a residence permit at the immigration office

International students who plan to stay longer than three months must apply for a residence permit with the immigration office of their city once they have arrived in Germany. Students with an EU nationality do not have to apply for a residence permit.

You must apply for the residence permit during the validity of your entry visa. If you have entered Germany without a visa, please make an appointment with the immigration office before the end of the first 90 days of your stay. You will receive the permit in form of a chip-card, the so-called electronic residence permit (eAT). As a rule, such a residence permit is valid for one year and must be renewed annually.

You will have to submit the following documents to the immigration office:

– completed application form
– copy of your passport with visa and entry stamp if applicable
– biometric passport photo (35x45mm)
– copy of confirmation of registration with the city
– copy of your rental contract
– certificate of enrollment at TH Köln
– proof of health insurance
– proof of sufficient funding (yearly)

In certain cases, the immigration office may ask for other documents. The advisers on site will tell you if this applies to you.

Ausländeramt Köln
You may go to any of Cologne’s immigration offices without an appointment. There is also a special student service of the immigration office. However, your application documents must be submitted beforehand (by e-mail as a pdf-file, by post or personally). An appointment will be made after examination of your application.

T: +49 221-221-93381
E: auslaenderamt-arbeitsmigration@stadt-koeln.de

Ausländeramt Gummersbach
Stahlstr. 5, 51645 Gummersbach-Dieringhausen
T: +49 2261-88-3202 / 3203, E: amt32@obk.de

Ausländerbehörde Leverkusen
Friedrich-Ebert-Platz 1, 51373 Leverkusen
T: +49 214-4063344
E: 333-ABH@stadt.leverkusen.de

Ausländerbehörde Hürth
Willy-Brandt-Platz 1, 50126 Bergheim
T: +49 2271-830, E: abh@rhein-erft-kreis.de
Opening a bank account

It is advisable to open an account with a German bank. This comes in particularly handy when paying your rent and transferring the semester fees. It is possible to open an account with any bank in the city you live in. Before doing so, please find out directly from the bank which documents you need and what costs are entailed for holding a personal banking account.

In general the following documents will be required:

- valid passport
- certificate of enrollment at TH Köln
- confirmation of registration with the city
- Tax Identification Number (IdNr)

The IdNr is automatically sent to you by the Federal Central Tax Office (BZSt) after your registration with the city. Further information is available on the BZSt website:

[www.bzst.de > English](http://www.bzst.de)

Since opening a bank account can take some time, we recommend that you bring enough cash for the first few weeks.
TH Köln activities & services

KARIBU – buddy program
Everybody needs some buddy! KARIBU is a program meant for newly arrived students of TH Köln. It offers mentoring sessions between more experienced students of TH Köln and new international students. New students in particular get the opportunity to receive support and advice from students who have been studying here for many semesters already.

Would you like to join? Then please sign up using the online form via our KARIBU website. We look forward to receiving your registration!

www.th-koeln.de/karibu
**Language Learning Center**
In any semester you have the opportunity to attend free language courses at the Language Learning Center of TH Köln. Currently the offered languages are: German as a foreign language, English, French, Italian and Spanish. If you participate successfully, you will receive a certificate and ECTS points at the end of every language course.

Please note that you can only take part in a certain language course if you can prove the pre-requisite language level by taking a placement test or with an up-to-date language certificate.

If you have any questions concerning the language courses offered during the semester, please visit the Language Learning Center’s website:

[www.th-koeln.de/slz](http://www.th-koeln.de/slz)

or by sending an e-mail to:

[www.sprachlernzentrum@th-koeln.de](mailto:www.sprachlernzentrum@th-koeln.de)

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**TANDEM of the University of Cologne**
The TANDEM program of the University of Cologne is aimed at all students of Cologne universities who wish to learn, develop or pass on a new language or existing foreign language skills. The focus is on learning languages together - in mutual exchange, freely and creatively. A language partnership is very informal and individual. You can arrange meetings with your tandem partner any time you want to and learn at your own speed.

Where can I find more information and sign up?

[www.tandem-unikoeln.de](http://www.tandem-unikoeln.de)

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**Campus IT and service desk**
The Campus IT department provides general IT services for the entire university. There are service desks at four different campus locations where your questions about setting up and using your CampusID or queries regarding Wi-Fi will be answered. You also have the option of acquiring several software products and setting up Wi-Fi access on your smartphone or laptop via Campus IT services. Please see:

[www.th-koeln.de > Hochschule > Organisation > Campus IT](http://www.th-koeln.de)
Medical and emergency services

In case of emergency, the following telephone numbers apply in Germany:
- Police: **110**
- Ambulance and fire services: **112**

It is a good idea to save these emergency numbers to your mobile phone so that you can call help immediately when an emergency occurs. Calls are free of charge from all telephone networks.

The emergency telephone number within the European Union is **112**, which you can call free of charge from any EU country at any time.

If you need medical attention, the following websites may be useful:
- **Doctors:** [www.kvno.de](http://www.kvno.de)
- **Hospitals:** [www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/gesundheit/krankenhaeuser](http://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/gesundheit/krankenhaeuser)
- **Hospital Gummersbach:** [www.klinikum-oberberg.de/standorte/kkh-gummersbach/](http://www.klinikum-oberberg.de/standorte/kkh-gummersbach/)
- **Dentists:** [www.zaek-nr.de](http://www.zaek-nr.de)

Please note that you need to take your health insurance card with you every time you visit a doctor.
Leisure time

Cologne university sports
The sports department of Cologne universities provides all students with an extensive sports program that is mostly free of charge. To participate in most courses, it is sufficient to present your valid MultiCa. For some courses it is necessary to register before the course starts or to pay a participation fee. Also at Gummersbach Campus, which is located a bit further away from Cologne, there are various sports activities offered by the sports department. The current sports program can be obtained as a brochure at all locations of TH Köln or as a download online:

You will also find a written notice at every German pharmacy telling you where to go for the nearest emergency service pharmacy.

Medical emergency service:
Dentist emergency service:
Pharmacy emergency services:

Working

In general, international students are permitted to take on a part-time job during their studies in Germany. Citizens of the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland have equal legal status on the labor market as German citizens. This means that they may access the labor market just like any other German student and they are also permitted to work as much as they choose to without having to obtain prior approval of German authorities.

Citizens from non-EU countries are normally permitted to work 120 full or 240 half days per year if they are in possession of a valid residence permit for Germany. The total number of hours you are allowed to work per year is stated in your residence permit. If you would like to work more days in one year, you will need to apply for a new permit from the immigration office. Further information can be found on our website:

Leisure time

Cologne university sports

UniSport Köln is the university sport of the University of Cologne and of the German Sport University Cologne (DSHS). A sports card is required to participate in the UniSport program, which costs 15€ per semester. Some special courses cost an additional participation fee, please see:

Medical emergency service:
Dentist emergency service:
Pharmacy emergency services:
### Useful Apps

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<td>App by KölnTourismus, has many tips and information about Cologne</td>
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### What’s going on in the city?

As a multicultural city with over one million inhabitants, Cologne and its surroundings offer a multitude of leisure activities for every taste: cultural events, sporting events, numerous restaurants, a varied nightlife and much more.

[www.th-koeln.de/international > Incomings > Studying and Living in Germany > Leisure](www.th-koeln.de/international)