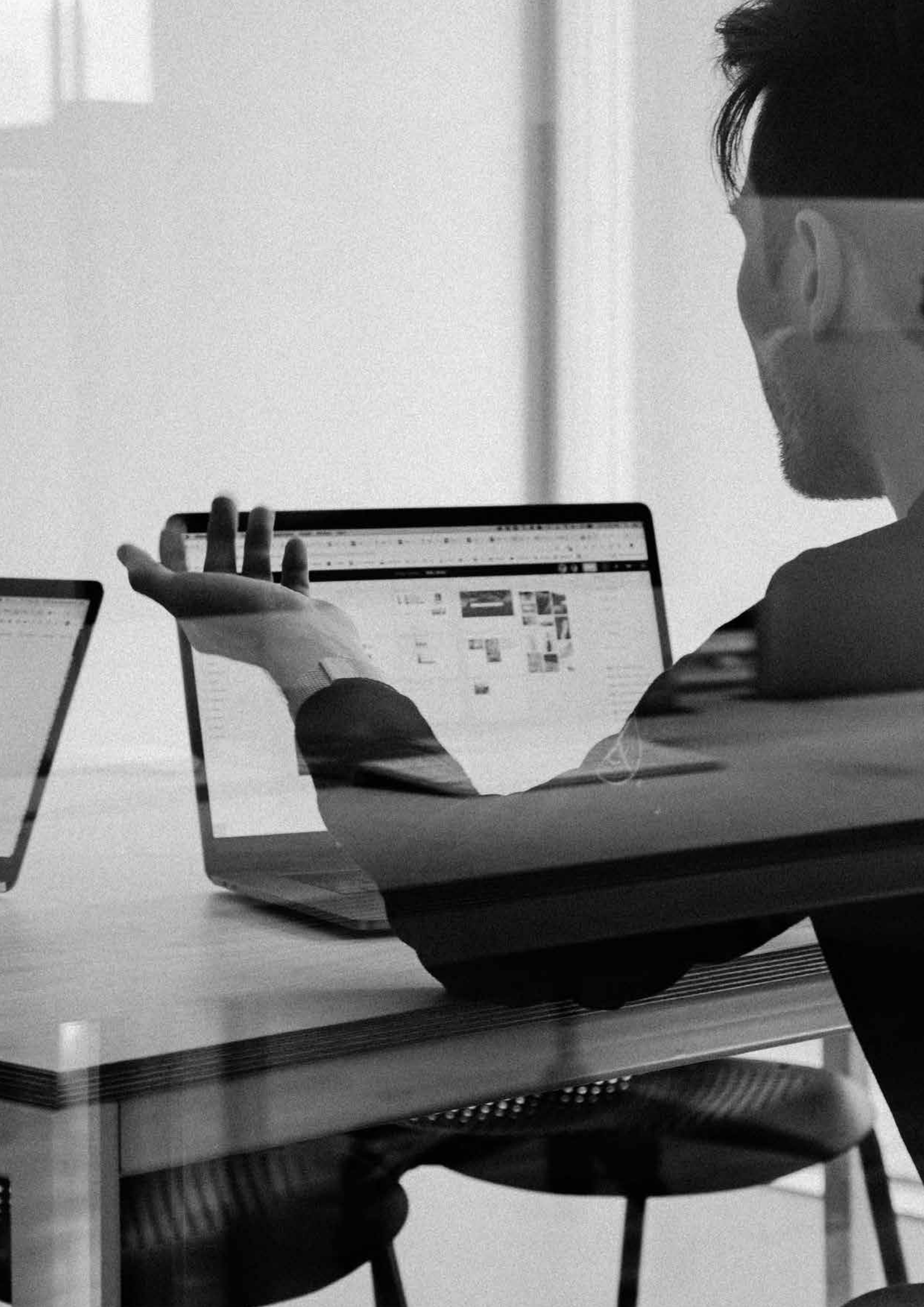


Working in Germany



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1. Introduction

Maybe you have just started your studies at the University of Konstanz, or maybe you have already completed a few semesters here. Whatever your situation, we would like to welcome you to the Career Service at the University of Konstanz! As an international student, you probably have a lot of questions about starting a career in Germany.

The Career Service team supports students with their transition from study to work. You can start using our services while you study to find out which career options are available for you and how you can prepare for working life.

For example, you may attend our presentations on job-hunting and careers, meet alumni and employers during events such as the “Kontaktpunkt” career fair, get individual advice and ask questions about doing internships, working while studying or starting your career. And there is more! Check out our **website**¹ for current events and programmes.

If you would like to know more about the German labour market, how you can prepare for your career start, what employment references are all about and what you should wear on your first day at work, you will find helpful tips in this brochure. We have also compiled many links and services provided at the university as well as outside to help you prepare for your career in Germany. If you have more questions or are writing an application, feel free to make an appointment with us for a consultation! We look forward to meeting you and talking about your experiences, questions and options.

Your Career Service team



On the following pages, we often refer to useful websites that you can use for further information. If you have the printed version of this guide in your hands, you will find a list of links and a QR code to the PDF version on the last pages. In the PDF version, you can simply click on the marked place in the text to open the link.

2. The German labour market

2.1. Facts and figures

In general, well-trained international applicants have many doors open to them in Germany. The unemployment rate in 2019 was only 5.0%, the second-lowest rate in the EU. At only 2.1 %, the rate of unemployed academics was even lower. The German economy is always on the lookout for specialists (“Fachkräftemangel”), especially in medical and nursing professions and in the construction industry. But also experts in engineering and the MINT (or STEM) subjects (mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology) are in high demand on the German labour market. Overall, international staff make up about 10% of academics working in Germany.

This positive situation in the labour market has remained stable for years. However, the global outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2020 will probably impact the German labour market as well. As the situation remains dynamic, no reliable forecast can be made at present. The Career Service monitors labour market developments and informs you on its **website**¹ about current trends and developments. You are very welcome to contact us if you would like to know more cs.beratung@uni-konstanz.de.

The names of large companies headquartered in Germany are known all over the world. However, the success of German business is mainly driven by its small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), companies with less than 250 staff members and/or annual turnover of less than 50 million euros. Among these SMEs are many hidden champions whose names are not so well known, but that are nonetheless world market leaders in their fields. Around 99% of all Germany companies are **SMEs**², accounting for around 61 % of the German workforce.

[Read more ...](#)

The **Bundesagentur für Arbeit**³ (Federal Employment Agency) supports job seekers with finding work, is responsible for paying out unemployment benefits and presents current **labour market statistics**⁴.

The initiative **WeikMU**⁵ brings highly-qualified international students or graduates and small and medium-sized enterprises together. It also provides a lot of information about the application process and careers in these companies.

Make it in Germany⁶ is the German government's portal for working professionals from around the world. Here you can find advice and consulting services, as well as information on visas and migration, working and everyday-life in Germany.

3. What employers expect from graduates

Did you know? Practical work experience is particularly important to employers in Germany. 81% of the HR managers surveyed view practical experience of an applicant as more important than a degree with very good grades completed in the standard period of study, according to the study **JobTrends**¹ 2017 conducted by the Staufenberg Institut and Kienbaum. When assessing a candidate's level of qualification, however, 50% of HR managers value a good final grade and prefer a master's degree. In case of international graduates, German-language skills should at least be level B2. For internships, too, you will usually need a basic knowledge of German.

Extra tip:

Preparing yourself for the German world of work during your studies will help you transition into your job after you graduate. It is not easy to keep track of which job-relevant skills you should acquire and which offers you could benefit from during your studies. This is why we developed the **Career Passport Programme**² especially for international students. While you study, you will be trained in job-relevant competences and skills and receive certified preparation for your career start in Germany. And if you sign up for the newsletter, you'll never miss an offer that will help you with your personal career planning. Sign up now on the Career Service website!

3.1. Expert knowledge

Degrees and certificates are very important in Germany. In general, Germany is more conservative in this regard than other countries, such as the UK. You can practice some professions, for example in the fields of law or medicine, only with a certain degree. But even though often a degree in a specific study programme is required in job announcements, it is always worth looking for ads for related subjects as well. If you think you

fit the job description well, although you studied another subject, you can apply nevertheless and explain in your cover letter why you would be suitable for the job. If you are not sure whether an applicant with your degree might be considered, you can contact the employer beforehand.

In addition to the courses in your study programme, you can deepen your expertise by attending summer schools or conferences, for example. A good opportunity for gaining valuable insights is working as a student assistant in a research project. Also, take advantage of the department's advising services and the professors' and instructors' office hours to discuss your individual study plan on a regular basis.

Tip: Get on the department's mailing list to learn about current events and programmes.

3.2. Practical experience

In addition to expert knowledge, practical work experience and qualifications can give you an edge in the hiring process! With English language skills being the most important (77%), internships are rated as very important by 73% of the companies surveyed in the study JobTrends 2017. Practical work experience (53%) is also viewed as very advantageous. You can get practical experience while studying – for example in practical courses and internships or while working as a student assistant, as a student employee or in a side job related to your subject. Another possibility is writing your final thesis while working in a company or on a topic related to practical work. You might also join an association/a club or volunteer to gain hands-on experience this way.

Various programmes at the University of Konstanz help you build up your practical skills:

At the **Centre for Transferable Skills**³ (SQ Centre), you

can acquire interdisciplinary qualifications and get practical project experience in transfer-oriented courses.

Job Shadowing⁴ will give you a glimpse of the German world of work as well as the opportunity to test your German language skills in a professional environment. Still looking for more ideas? Find many other tips under item 3: Working while you study.

3.3. Language skills

One thing is for sure: In most companies, a very good knowledge of German is a central pre-requisite for staff members. You will need German for internal communications as well as for contact with customers and business partners. Good German language skills will increase your chances of getting a well-paid job that matches your qualifications. No matter how international a company is – the fact that you speak German shows your colleagues and your employer that you can easily integrate into the team and that you are genuinely interested in a (professional) future in Germany.

Therefore, use your time studying in Germany to learn the language (ideally at level B2 and higher) – and apply it in your part-time job, in seminars, language courses and in conversation with Germans. Never again will you be able to learn German so inexpensively and easily. At the same time, it is important for many jobs and internships that you have very good English skills, including very good pronunciation. Use your time in Konstanz to work on that, too.

You will find numerous options for improving your language skills at our university.

As a University of Konstanz student, you can attend courses at the **Language Institute (SLI)**⁵ for free. You

cannot only learn German and English, but also many other languages there. In some study programmes, your ECTS credits acquired in a language course will even be recognized. If a course does not fit into your schedule, you can also improve your language skills in the self-study centre.

Our International Office organizes **intensive German language classes**⁶ for exchange students and first-semester students in September and March. Usually these courses are not fully booked, so that you can also take part in later semesters.

If you need mainly practice and you would like to meet new people, then the **Tandem Programme**⁷ might be just your thing. You will be paired up with a native speaker with whom you can practice your target language in your free time, while also helping them to learn your language at the same time. The SLI will take care of arranging the tandem.

Another good opportunity to practice your foreign language skills is the **Language Café Konstanz**⁸. Language enthusiasts, people who would like to speak their native language again, or language learners who want to expand their language skills in a relaxed atmosphere – all are welcome at the meetings, which usually take place in various locations in Konstanz. The dates are published on Facebook. The university group Café Mondial e.V., too, connects people interested in foreign languages in the *Sprachlerncafé*. You can find the dates on **Facebook**⁹ and the Café Mondial **website**¹⁰.

3.4. IT-skills and data literacy

No matter what profession you choose after graduation: You can be sure that you will have to do at least some of your tasks with the help of a computer. And even though

using a computer, smartphone and so on is considered standard today, it is well worth deepening your IT skills while you study. Depending on the field you would like to work in, different skills are required. Programming languages, excellent Excel skills, experience with content management systems or statistical tools and other skills are in high demand on the job market. Since the coronavirus pandemic at the latest, companies expect their staff to also be able to use videoconferencing and other collaboration tools. To get an idea which IT skills are sought after, you can simply browse through a few job ads. Once you know what you would like to learn or deepen your knowledge of, have a look at the following programmes:

Our **Communication, Information, Media Centre (KIM)**¹¹ runs several IT courses for students. The **Centre for Transferable Skills**¹², too, provides a great **programme**¹³ for learning new skills – ranging from programming to digital media design and much more. In addition to that, many *departments* offer courses in which you can learn skills specifically for your field of study. You will find these in the current course catalogue in ZEuS.

A new innovative course at the University of Konstanz is the **Advanced Data and Information Literacy Track – ADILT**¹⁴ for short. It is a great programme both for data enthusiasts and data novices from all disciplines, and when you complete the 30 ECTS programme, you will receive a data and information literacy certificate. These skills are in very high demand in the German labour market!

You will also find many courses (for a fee or for free) on the internet that you can use to improve your IT skills. Some providers grant discounts to students, so taking part in such a course during your studies could really be worth it.

3.5. Soft skills

Working in a team, taking the initiative, performing well under pressure – such soft skills are mentioned in nearly every job ad. Try to find out what your strong points are and what you enjoy doing. Perhaps it is easy for you to keep an overview of all your exams, deadlines for term papers and dates for presentations and you plan enough time for everything? Perfect, you are well-structured and organized. Maybe you play in a soccer team in your free time and programmed an app together with your fellow students during an internship semester? Then teamwork is your strong suit. Use your student years to try out different things and find out what you are good at and what you like to do. Not only your studies, but also your hobbies, side job or volunteering will show you your strong points.

Soft skills are often part of your personality or skills you have acquired through your life experiences. But, you can also specifically train them. The **Career Service**¹⁵ and **Centre for Transferable Skills**¹⁶ run many courses, e.g. on communication skills, presenting and conflict management.

4. Working while you study

4.1. Legal conditions for working while you study

As a student from a non-EU/EEA country (Drittstaat) with a student visa or residence permit, you can usually work 120 full or 240 half days per year. If you would like to work more, you will need the consent of the foreigners' registration office (Ausländerbehörde).

There are two exceptions:

You may work as a *research assistant or student assistant* for an unlimited period of time, but you must notify the foreigners' registration office.

Unpaid or paid *compulsory internships* during your studies and *internships in companies for writing your thesis* do not count towards the 120 full / 240 half days per year. You do not need the consent of the foreigners' registration office. Voluntary internships, however, count towards the annual working day limit, and you need the consent of the foreigners' registration office for periods beyond this limit.

If you are from an EU-country or Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland or Switzerland, the same requirements apply to you on the labour market as to Germans and you may work here without any special restrictions. Please note that Swiss citizens do, however, have to notify the foreigners' registration office in the German municipality where they work.

In addition to residence regulations, there are other legal provisions and formalities, such as those concerning social security contributions or health insurance. On the **International Office website**¹ you will find an overview of the most important regulations.

4.2. Looking for a student job

Check for example the **Career Service job portal**² in ZEuS to find a student job, a job as a student assistant or an internship. Some departments even run their own internship databases, which you can find on the corresponding websites. Student assistant jobs often are posted in the departments and their mailing lists. More student side jobs are announced on the website of **Seezeit student services**³. You can also look for job postings at the university and in the city of Konstanz.

4.3. Internships

As practical work experience is an asset for starting your career, internships are a great opportunity. You will get an insight into everyday work in Germany, gather practical experience and make contacts in the working world. It's best to seize this opportunity while you're still at university. In many study programmes an internship is *compulsory*. You have to be enrolled to complete such an internship. There is no legal entitlement to a wage, but some companies, especially in certain industries, voluntarily pay their interns. A *voluntary internship* is exempt from minimum wage regulations only up to three months; if it lasts longer, the company has to pay you the minimum wage. Unfortunately, this often means that companies simply do not offer voluntary internships lasting more than three months. It is much easier to find a compulsory internship.

To help you get the most out of your internship, we support you with an **e-learning tool in ILIAS**⁴. It helps you to find a suitable internship and reflect on your experiences during the internship, so that months later when you apply for your first job after graduation, you still know which skills you acquired through the internship.

4.4. Typical student jobs: student assistant, student trainee, side job

Many students work as *undergraduate or graduate* student assistants in research, for university research groups/professors, in the university administration or with *Seezeit* student services. Especially if you would like to pursue an academic career after graduation, joining a research team will give you a very good first impression of what your later job could be like. As a *student trainee* ("*Werkstudent*"), you work in a company with the job being related to your field of studies. You will gain valuable experience for your career start. Also *side jobs* that are not directly linked to your study programme might teach you useful skills. In gastronomy, for example, you need to maintain an overview of what's happening even in stressful situations. In retail, you have to be able to relate to customers and understand the wants and needs of others. And as a camp counsellor at youth camps, you demonstrate a sense of responsibility and organizational skills.

4.5. Employment reference

No matter which job or internship you do – at the end you should ask for an employment reference. You will need it for future applications!

Employment references are uncommon in other countries, but in Germany they are an integral part of the application package. Your employer issues the reference when your job ends. If you work with one employer for a long time or you change jobs within a company, you can also ask for an interim employment reference ("*Arbeitszeugnis*").

In the reference, your performance will be assessed and that is why potential future employers are so interested in them. By law, the reference must contain certain content: The duration of your employment, your tasks and conduct towards colleagues, supervisors and customers, for example. A legal regulation seems bizarre at first glance: The job reference must be worded positively, even if the employee's performance was poor. As a result, positive phrasing can actually reflect a bad assessment: "For the most part, he completed the tasks assigned to him to our satisfaction", for example, indicates below-average performance. Accordingly, a good employment reference often contains somewhat exaggerated praise: "He has always performed the tasks assigned to him to our fullest satisfaction". Especially if German is not your native language, it will be very difficult to decode the wording in an employment reference. Ask your German friends or the Career Service team to help you assess your reference.

Don't be put off by these strange legal regulations. If you complete an internship during your studies or have a side job, make sure to ask for an employment reference. A good reference might convince future employers that they would like to get to know you in a job interview. For you as an international applicant, a reference is the perfect proof that you are already well-acquainted with working in Germany.

[Read more ...](#)

You can find more information about residence regulations and social security requirements for working during your studies on the websites of the **DAAD**⁵ and the **Study in Germany**⁶ initiative.

5. Starting your career after graduation

In the long run, international students are just as successful in finding a job in Germany as their German peers – even if they tend to take a bit longer to find a suitable position (30% search for a year or longer). *Good German language skills* (ideally level B2 or higher) will greatly increase your chances of a successful career start in a job suitable for your qualification. If you can communicate well in German in the workplace, companies will especially benefit from your additional language skills and intercultural competencies. By hiring international staff, they can also increase diversity in the company, thus promoting creative ideas and flexible solutions.

5.1. Legal conditions for working after graduation

You would like to work in Germany after completing your degree? Before looking for a job, you need to find out what the *residence regulations are for working* in Germany. These depend on whether you are an EU citizen, from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland or from a non-EU/EEA country.

In the first case, you have the *right to move and work freely* within the European Union. You have the same access to the labour market as Germans do and you do not need any consent from the authorities to work here – Swiss nationals, however, do have to the foreigners' registration office in the German municipality where they work.

If you are from a non-EU/EEA country, you need a *residence permit* to work in Germany. For international students, this is usually the *residence permit for the purpose of studying*. After graduation, you can have this residence permit extended for up to 18 months to find a qualified job. During this time, you can work in any job you like without having to get consent from the authorities.

Find out which residence permit you need once you have found a job on the government's website **Make it in Germany**¹. If you have any questions, you can contact the **local foreigners' registration office**². More information about working after graduation is also available at **Study in Germany**³.

5.2. Typical entry-level jobs

– Direct entry

Starting directly with your future job is perfect for graduates who would like to quickly move up to a responsible position. Generally, the position and tasks are clearly defined. After a relatively short settling-in period, you will acquire further know-how while already taking on your own projects.

– Trainee programme

If you would like to get a good impression of the overall structure in a company and its different departments and processes first, you should opt for a trainee programme. In 6 to 24 months, you will work in different positions and usually benefit from training and/or mentoring. After completing the programme, trainees often take on positions of responsibility within the company.

– “Volontariat” (practical training)

A “Volontariat” is similar to a trainee programme. The big difference is that these positions are predominantly available in the culture and media industry – for example, in journalism. Consequently, particularly humanities scholars apply for “Volontariat” programmes. In many cases, the company does not plan to hire you directly afterwards.

6. Looking for a job

– “Referendariat” (teacher traineeship)

This is the name of the preparation programme for future teachers and lawyers, but also for professionals in the higher civil service (e.g. state libraries, urban planning and forestry). It can last up to two years.

– Start-up and self-employment

Thinking about starting a business? Some students become self-employed with a small start-up while they are still studying. The university’s start-up initiative **kilometer1**⁴ is the first point of contact for interested students. In some professions, you also can work as a freelancer/self-employed. As every situation is different and different regulations may apply, you should definitely consult all available advisory services when starting your business. By the way, as a non-EU/EEA national you too can work self-employed or start a business in Germany. If you graduate from a German university, even simplified regulations will apply.

You’ve decided to start your career in Germany? Then you need to know how and where you can find job openings. We would like to share a few ways of job hunting with you. It’s probably best to pursue several strategies at the same time.

What is the first and maybe the best place to find jobs? *Your own network!* In Germany, around a third of all positions are filled through personal contacts. This is why building your professional network is so important. You can start during your studies. In addition to family and friends, there are other good ways of building up your network: internships and student jobs with potential employers provide first contacts, which you can then maintain via LinkedIn or XING. Sometimes it is possible to complete your thesis in a company, and when you volunteer, you will also get to know interesting people. Stay in touch with your professors, lecturers and fellow students (in LinkedIn or XING alumni groups). And why not participate in a **mentoring programme**¹ or visit a **career fair**²? Both options are available at the University of Konstanz.

The most obvious way is to search for *job announcements* online or in newspapers. The Career Service maintains a **job and internship portal**³ in ZEuS. On the Career Service website, you will also find external and specialized job sites and search engines. Depending on your study programme and the field you would like to work in, you should try different sites and keywords to get suitable results. Take your time to familiarize yourself with the search engines – it’s worth it! But please note: Only around 40% of all jobs are advertised in announcements. All other entry-level positions are filled in other ways.

You can also take the initiative and write an *unsolicited application*. This means that you apply to a company or department although they are not looking for staff at the moment. If you are interested in a specific company

or industry, this might be a good option. To be successful with this type of application, you need convincing reasons: How can the company benefit from you? Before writing the application, you should check with the company whether they accept unsolicited applications in general, as otherwise you might go to a lot of trouble for nothing.

7. The application process

7.1. Application documents

As a rule, a number of application documents are required in Germany. This includes a cover letter specifically tailored to the position, a curriculum vitae (CV) as well as copies/scans of certificates, employment references and other documentation. You need to find out what is required in terms of form and content in the application, as in Germany this might be quite different from your home country. Download the **Career Service guide**¹ that will help you compile your application for a position in Germany.

International students, in particular, wonder in which language they should submit their application documents. Basically, you can take the job ad as an indicator and write your application in that language. If you are unsure or there is no job ad, you also can ask the company which languages they accept applications in.

At any rate, your application documents should be flawless. Ask a native speaker to proofread your application. The Career Service, too, will gladly check your application documents. Simply bring along your documents to our weekly drop-in office hour or send it to us via email to **get feedback**².

7.2. Job interview

If your application documents are convincing, the next step is the job interview. There are several different forms of interviews: you might be interviewed via phone, sometimes you will be asked questions in a videoconference, and of course, there are in-person interviews where you meet the HR manager or supervisor. No

matter what type of interview you attend – you have to thoroughly prepare for it. Start by researching the company, the industry and the position. Then spend some time thinking about which of your skills and knowledge the company and the position will benefit from. As employers expect you to ask questions, think about what you would like to know about the company and position. A job interview is not only about determining whether you fit the position – you should also find out whether you would like to work with the company.

Each semester, we explain the typical process and questions in a presentation. If you missed it, you can watch the **recording and slides on our website**³. Contact us if you have any questions! You can also train for job interviews in one **of our workshops**⁴. Just watch out for the event “Mock Interview”.

7.3. Assessment centre

Some companies use assessment centres (AC) in the recruiting process. Especially for trainee positions, they are quite common. During an AC, which can last between one to three days, you will be given tasks to complete with a number of other candidates. While performing the tasks, you will be observed and assessed according to pre-defined criteria. The goal is to assess your suitability, skills and competencies and identify the ideal person for the job. Sometimes you receive tasks beforehand that you have to complete online.

An AC usually includes different types of tasks to evaluate the candidates' cognitive abilities, personality and competencies such as communication skills, conflict-resolution skills and analytical skills as objectively

as possible. You probably will have to work on a case study by yourself or in a team with others, find solutions for given problems in group discussions, solve conflicts in role plays, give a presentation or prioritize deadlines and tasks in the classic in-tray exercise. In addition, there might be psychological questionnaires and tests on your general knowledge, logical thinking and mathematical abilities.

Often ACs also include tasks to test whether your personality and your views fit the company culture well (cultural fit). The focus on your ability to develop and learn has become more important in recent years: Some ACs check whether you are able to use the feedback you received the day before and apply it while performing a similar task.

There are a vast number of guidebooks and exercises available online or in print that you can use to prepare for ACs. If you are familiar with typical AC tasks and know what is important, you can be more at ease during an AC – not least because many of the tasks are not that difficult by themselves, but the challenge is rather that you have to deal with them under time constraints.

7.4. The job offer

You have made it through the sometimes gruelling interview process and have been offered a job? Congratulations! Now it's your turn: Do you want to accept the offer?

Most companies find it fair enough that you want to sleep on it before saying yes. They, too, want you to be sure of your decision. If you accept the offer, the

company will tell you which documents are required for the hiring process, when and where your first day at work starts and so on.

And if you do not wish to accept the offer? Maybe you found out in the interview that the position does not meet your expectations, or you received another offer in the meantime. At any rate, you have to craft a gracious “thanks, but no thanks” note, perhaps briefly explaining your reasons.

You were turned down? Unfortunately, this is part of the process, and you will often have to write many applications until you are successful. Always remind yourself: Being rejected does not mean that your performance is insufficient, but that another candidate suited the company and position a little bit better. Use the experience from this recruitment process for your next applications. If you were turned down after an interview or assessment centre, it can be worth asking for feedback. However, the company is not obliged to provide this feedback.

8. Salary

One thing job starters are particularly looking forward to: their first real salary. But how much should you ask for? And, how much does one usually earn in a job in Germany?

The short answer is: It depends. This means you need to do some research to get a sense of the typical salary range for a particular job. There are different criteria: Which type of job am I applying for and what is my degree? Which industry? Is it an entry-level position, a trainee position, or do I already have professional experience? On our Career Service website you can find an **overview of portals**¹ with salary information.

Please note that most of these portals indicate the gross annual salary. In Germany, salaries are usually paid out monthly – with wage tax and social contributions (e.g. unemployment insurance, health insurance, pension insurance) being deducted automatically. Use a **gross-net calculator**² to determine how much you will actually have in your bank account at the end of the month.

Sometimes you have to mention your salary expectations in the cover letter or during the interview. In this case, you always state the annual gross salary. Also be prepared to justify your salary expectations, for example, based on the results of your salary research or the special skills you bring to the table. In other jobs, the salary is non-negotiable, for example, because a collective agreement determines the salary level for all staff, or the company has a set budget for the position. If the salary was not mentioned in the job announcement and during the interview, you can ask about it at the end of your job interview.

9. German work culture

In many respects, the working world in Germany is quite similar to that of other countries. However, there are a few particularities you should be aware of. As with all general tips, these characteristics can vary widely between different companies and institutions – for example, in a young start-up in Munich or a medium-sized company in Hessen. Observe your environment when you start and ask questions if you are not sure what is expected. That's what German career starters do, too. Everybody will gladly support you in navigating your new work environment.

9.1. Punctuality

That really is no cliché: Punctuality is very important for working in Germany. Being a mere 5 to 10 minutes late for a meeting is already considered impolite. During the meeting, too, Germans tend to follow the set agenda and the discussions should not deviate too far from the topic. Don't get confused if your German friends arrive too late for private dates – they'll never do so in their professional environment.

9.2. Workflow

Workflows in Germany tend to be steady and rapid. Projects should be completed within the set time schedule. In addition to a rapid implementation, accurate execution is key. If you are not able to meet a deadline, you'll have to inform your colleagues as early as possible and explain the reasons for the delay. In general, communication is quite direct and people will openly express criticism. This is why you need to deal with criticism professionally, even though such a direct way of communicating comes across as impolite and unusual to many international staff members.

9.3. Decisions

Hierarchies are respected in the German world of work. If decisions need to be made, you'll have to use the official channels. So, always consult your direct supervisor if you have questions or important decisions to make. If necessary, he/she will consult the next higher management level.

9.4. Greetings

The normal way of greeting each other before the coronavirus pandemic was a short and firm handshake, which also was the usual way of saying goodbye. During the pandemic, however, you should avoid this because of the potential risk of infection. There is no general replacement – some people greet each other with elbow bumps, others simply nod. Which alternative will become the established way of greeting instead of a handshake remains to be seen – and will probably vary from case to case. This is why it is absolutely normal to be unsure how to greet others in your first personal meeting. But rest assured: it's the same for everyone. A friendly smile is always a good start, and then you just have to wait and see what the other person does.

9.5. Titles

Titles are still quite important in Germany – maybe not as important as in Austria or Italy, but definitely more than in the US, for example. Usually, titles are included in German business cards and letterheads. We recommend you address your business partner with his/her title and last name in your first (email) contact, for example: "Dear Professor Meyer". You do not have to introduce yourself with your full title, however.

9.6. Dress code

At work, Germans tend to prefer a relatively conservative way of dressing – however, there are huge differences depending on the employer and industry. General guidelines: Dress more formally at the start, and later loosen up the wardrobe a bit if your colleagues are dressed more casually.

9.7. Private life and work

How much colleagues share about their private lives often depends on the company culture. In some companies, the focus is very work-centred and informal talks among colleagues don't take up very much time. Other companies actively promote private contacts among their staff, e.g. by hosting leisure activities after work. There is always a little time for small talk at work, though.

What is important: Employees in Germany who are not on vacation may only be absent from work for private reasons in exceptional cases. If you have to stay home to care for a sick child, for example, you have to inform your supervisor immediately. And if you have a private appointment (e.g. a doctor's appointment) during your working hours, you should let your boss know in good time beforehand.

10. FAQs

Does the Career Service organize placements?

No, we cannot directly organize a position or internship for you, as German companies prefer to choose their staff members and interns themselves. However, we will gladly advise you about strategies for finding and applying for suitable positions.

How important is the university's reputation for your job prospects?

In Germany, where you study is not as important as it is in many other countries. When hiring graduates, the reputation of a university was important to 28% of HR managers, according to "Jobtrend 2017", so it does play a certain role, after all. Make sure to know what your University of Konstanz study programme offers as compared with similar study programmes at other universities. You can distinguish yourself from other applicants more easily if you know which special research priorities and contents you learned about in your study programme.

I worked in a side job that is not related to my studies (e.g. as a waitress or shop assistant). Should I mention that job in my CV?

The fact that you have worked alongside your studies demonstrates a high degree of independence. In addition to that, you acquire skills in such jobs that are very useful for other positions, such as stress resistance and organizational skills. Maybe you even improved your German language skills at this job. So we recommend you list your part-time job in your CV, but don't give it too much space compared to other skills and experience either.

Do I need translations of my documents for a job application in Germany?

In most cases, your certificates will also be accepted in English. If your certificates are in another language than German or English, you may offer to provide translations if required. Please do so on a separate sheet attached to your application.

Do my certificates have to be certified for a job application in Germany?

If not explicitly required, your certificates do not need to be certified. But make sure scans and copies are neat, free of creases, straight and easy to read.

How many applications will I have to write until I find a job?

This depends on many factors: the current situation in the labour market, the industry or the region, to name but a few. This is why we cannot give you an exact amount. What we can tell you, however, is that most graduates need at least a few weeks or months and have to write applications in the double digits. If you realize there is room for improvement with your application and search strategy, we will gladly help you with your transition into the job world. Simply contact us!

I found an interesting event in the Career Service's calendar, but I am not able to attend it. How else can I get the relevant information?

Visit our **website**¹! There you will find many recordings of our presentations and you can download the corresponding slides. Please log in with your university account.

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