Accommodation in Germany – Information and helpful hints for international students

Finding accommodation is one of the first tasks international students have to face at the beginning of their studies in Germany. This can often be difficult und frustrating. Therefore, we would like to support you by sharing some information and tips with you.

Please be aware that that finding long-term accommodation in Germany might take several weeks. For this reason, we advise you to start looking for accommodation as soon as possible after you have received your letter of admission. One of the most likely difficulties in your search can be the language barrier and communicating with potential landlords.

General Information

- The monthly rent for accommodation is divided into ***Kaltmiete*** and ***Warmmiete***.
  Kaltmiete or basic rent, is the part of your rent that covers the use of one or several rooms. Warmmiete or total rent is the sum of Kaltmiete + Nebenkosten. ***Nebenkosten*** or utility costs are in most cases composed of i.e.: waste collection, water, gas, heating and other amenities in the house.
- Usually you will be required to pay a ***Kaution*** or deposit, which can be the amount of up to three times your monthly basic rent. This money serves as security for your landlord. If you leave the accommodation in good condition, the deposit is returned to you when moving out. However, the deposit is often withheld until the utility costs have been balanced out and no other debts/bills remain.
- Another fee you need to consider in your monthly living costs is the licence fee for public broadcasting in Germany, called ***Rundfunkgebühr***. The current fee is € 18.36 per month. Please also notice that the amount is levied for each residence and has to be paid regardless of whether you are watching or listening of what is being broadcasted or not. If you live in one household together with others, the fee can be shared. You can find further information at: www.rundfunkbeitrag.de/welcome/englisch/index_ger.html.
- Depending on your personal needs and financial resources, you have the following housing options: Living in a small apartment or studio by yourself or living in a shared flat, also known as ***Wohngemeinschaft (WG)***. WGs are very popular amongst students in Germany. They can either be organised privately or administered by a public entity like the Studierendenwerk Paderborn in terms of university student housing ***(Studierendenwohnheim).*** In a WG several people share one apartment, but each flat-mate has his/her own room. The kitchen, bathroom and sometimes a living room are used communally and the costs for rent, electricity and internet are shared.
- For a room in a shared apartment on the free market[1], you can expect a monthly rent of **€ 290-500 (Hamm/Lippstadt)** – depending on the room's size and location**.**
- A room in a Studierendenwohnheim will cost approx. **€ 300-550/month** including utility costs.

[1] Prize range according to www.wg-gesucht.de, accessed June 2025.

University Student Housing / Residence Halls

Beside the residence halls which are administered by the *Studierendenwerk Paderborn* in Hamm and Lippstadt, there are two additional and privately-run residence halls in Hamm. One is called *SCI:Q CampusLiving* and located across the road from the HSHL Campus in Hamm. The other is managed by the *Berufsförderungswerk Hamm (bfw)*. As renting a room in a residence hall has many advantages, we recommend to apply for one of them first.

What are the **ADVANTAGES** of a residence hall?

- ✓ All rooms are furnished and usually reasonably priced.[2]
- ✓ Internet access is included.
- ✓ You can apply for and accept a room offer even before arriving in Germany.
- ✓ You will get in touch with other students easily.

Please note: As there is a limited number of rooms, not every applicant will receive an offer! You might be placed on a waiting list and receive an offer in a later semester. Therefore, we strongly recommend looking for accommodation on the free housing market parallel to your application for students' residence halls.

How to **APPLY** for a room at the *Studierendenwerk Paderborn?*

- **Visit the website**: www.studierendenwerk-pb.de/en/housing/
  Please check the campus-location of your study program in advance and according to this choose one of the residence halls!
- You can **hand in several applications** for different residence halls at the same time.
- After **submitting** the housing application online, make sure to **click on the link** which is sent to your private e-mail address in order to complete the application process fully.
- Once you have accepted an offer and signed the contract, the Studierendenwerk Paderborn will ask you to pay the deposit and the first month's rent in advance.

How to **APPLY** for an apartment at *SCI:Q CampusLiving* in Hamm?

- **Have a look** at the offers **on the website**: http://sci-q.de/campusliving.html
- Use the provided **contact form** to ask for further information.
  Although the website is only in German, you can still request to receive information in English.

How to **APPLY** for an apartment at *Berufsförderungswerk Hamm (bfw)* in Hamm?

- **Have a look** at the offers **on the website**: bfw-hamm.de/wohnen-und-leben-im-bfw-hamm
- **Write an email** to accommodation@bfw-hamm.de to state your interest in renting a room for students.
  Although the website is only in German, you can still request to receive information in English.

[2] Blankets, pillows, linens and towels are usually not provided in students' residence halls.

Housing on the private market

Usually landlords like to meet their future tenants before signing a contract. Therefore, it is often more difficult to find a room, especially for international students who have not yet arrived in Germany. Nevertheless, look around for accommodation options early and arrange viewing appointments as soon as possible.

Where can I **find offers** on the free housing market?

There are many **websites** that list room and apartment offers. The most common ones are:

- www.studierendenwerk-pb.de > Wohnen > Privatzimmer suchen
- www.jungeswohnen-hamm.de (Hamm)
- www.wg-gesucht.de
- www.ebay-kleinanzeigen.de > Immobilien > Auf Zeit & WG
- www.bwg-lippstadt.de/kontakt.php > personal visit of office hours recommended[3]
- www.hgb-hamm.de > personal visit of office hours recommended[4]
- www.immobilienscout24.de > „Wohnung“ oder „WG Zimmer“

Also, check **local newspapers** which print housing ads regularly:

- **Der Patriot** - www.derpatriot.de > Wochentip (Lippstadt) > skip to last pages
- **Westfälischer Anzeiger** (Hamm)
- **Stadtanzeiger** (Hamm or Soest)

Besides this, there will be offers on the **notice boards on campus**:

- **Hamm**: Building H1.1-E00 and in the canteen
- **Lippstadt**: Building L2.1-E00 next to the lockers.

Here, you can find an explanatory list of abbreviations that are most commonly used in rental ads → https://vegetarische.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/abbreviations-used-in-apartment-ads/

Further Hints

First contact & First steps of renting a room

- ✓ When contacting the landlord, **write a little bit about yourself** to make a nice first impression. E.g. tell them about your age, country of origin, purposes of your stay in Germany or study program.
- ✓ Since not everyone in Germany speaks English, we recommend you to **also translate your text to German**[5] and hand in both versions. Here you can find a **template** HSHL has prepared already: www.hshl.de/en/studying/information-about-your-studies.
- ✓ Use the housing support letter, which the International Office of HSHL has provided with your admission.

[3] Reasonable prices, choosing of tenant considers social aspects as well, offers a large number of apartments
[4] Reasonable prices, choosing of tenant considers social aspects as well, offers a large number of apartments
[5] You can use DeepL as a translator: https://www.deepl.com/translator

✓ If you are in first contact with a landlord and discussing a potential lease, we advise to make it clear that you require a **written rental agreement with signatures**. Otherwise, an e-mail or even a verbal agreement can be valid as a contract and oblige you to pay rent.

× You should **not pay fees or deposits in advance**[6]. It is not advisable to transfer money for viewing appointments and suchlike. Payments are **only due after** you have agreed on renting an apartment/room and the **starting date of the rental** contract has begun. Please **inform yourself about** common **scam methods**.[7]

What if I can't find a room on time or in the right city? – Short-time options

If you did not find a suitable housing, before your arrival, you should still arrange accommodation for the first few weeks in a hostel, hotel, holiday apartment or airbnb. This gives you a place to stay while looking for long-term accommodation.

- **Addresses of youth hostels nearby:**
  Paderborn: www.jugendherberge.de/en/youth-hostels/paderborn
  Dortmund: www.jugendherberge.de/en/youth-hostels/dortmund
- ***Zwischenmiete/Wohnen auf Zeit*** **(short-time rental)**
  Another possibility for short-time rental is the so-called *Zwischenmiete* or *Wohnen auf Zeit*. Here, you can rent a room (usually fully furnished) over a limited time period. This offer is often provided by students who are going on a semester abroad or doing an internship in a different city/country.

Further hints and information:

- **Post your request** on Facebook and E-Bay Kleinanzeigen, e.g. "HSHL- Offizielle Guppe der Studenten" "Hamm-Lippstadt University" or other local groups.
- Also consider **forming a new WG** with others. In order to do so, you will need to search for an entire apartment instead of looking for a single room.
- **Ask your friends and fellow students** to keep their eyes and ears open. Often times somebody knows someone who is looking for a roommate.
- Consider **living in a city or town close by** – at least for the first semester. Since you get the semester ticket, you can easily use trains and busses to **commute to HSHL**. However, make sure to **check the train and bus connections** between the city and the location of your study program (Hamm/Lippstadt) in advance.
- Once you have found suitable accommodation make sure you **understand all the terms of the rental agreement**.
- Once you move in, remember to **inform** the local residents' registration office and HSHL student services **about your new address.**
- When moving out, keep in mind that there is generally a **legal period of 3 months' notice** for terminating a lease – if the contract does not provide other terms.

Last but not least: Be patient, do not give up and stay positive.