

BioBuddies Handbook

A guideline for all international biology students

2020



TECHNISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT
DARMSTADT

BIO
BUDDIES

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1 BioBuddies

Guten Tag and a warm welcome to the Technical University of Darmstadt, especially to all international students joining the department of biology as well as the BioBuddies.

Now, you are probably asking yourself “Who are the BioBuddies?” and “What exactly do they do?”. The Biobuddy program was implemented in 2012 to help international students, making their life and study in Germany as easy as possible. We are all biology students and enjoy helping and getting to know new people. Our greatest advantage is that we do not just know the everyday life of a biology student, but also share it with you. In this program, each international student will be assigned to a local biology student (buddy). This Buddy will take part in many activities with you and hopefully helping you build one of your first friendships. By doing this, we believe this offers you the best start in Darmstadt, with a friend by your side who can assist in language and culture barriers. Furthermore, your Buddy will help to answer any questions and problems in your university and everyday life. This means he or she will be there for all your uncertainties regarding course selection, internships, exams, accommodation, nightlife and anything else that you’re interested in. Besides spending time with your Buddy, there are also lots of meetings with all the other Buddies and the international students taking part in the Biobuddy program. The group activities are always decided upon collectively and include going to the cinema, having a BBQ and spending a relaxing weekend in a new place. If you are curious and want to know how you can take part in the BioBuddies program, simply send an e-mail to **biobuddies@asta.tu-darmstadt.de**. We will get back to you as soon as possible to arrange a meeting. Moreover, you can take a look at our website: **https://www.bio.tu-darmstadt.de/studieren/biobuddies_1/biobuddies.de.jsp**.

We’re looking forward to hearing from you!

Best wishes,

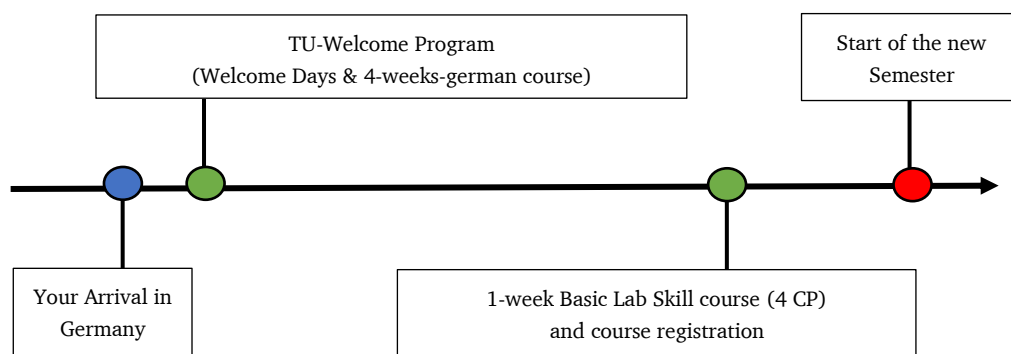
The BioBuddies

2 Guideline

2.1 What is this for?

We have created this useful guideline to give you a heads up for all the things you need before the beginning of your semester abroad. Take a good look and hopefully you can use it! Consider **printing this** list for a better overview!

Timeline – What to do before your semester starts at TU Darmstadt



2.2 Things you should do while still at home

- Write and submit your application. Both winter and summer semester have application deadlines. For winter it's the 31st of November and for summer the 31st of May each year. You can check your application status anytime at the following website:
http://www.tu-darmstadt.de/aaa/online_bewerbung_2/online_-bewerbung_aaa.de.jsp.
- Contact the BioBuddies and tell us what courses you're thinking of taking so we can start the planning and hopefully get you into all the courses you desire! No worries, we have a special meeting with the study office of our department to register for the courses.
- Prior to your arrival, you should look for an accommodation. That can be either a flat or a student dorm. The latter has a waiting list on which your name can be added after applying. But don't get discouraged, international students are being prioritized for dorm rooms and mostly get them assigned to (see chapter **How to find a flat?**).
- Check your flight/arrival information. We can recommend the following airlines: Lufthansa, Air Berlin, Eurowings and Sun Express. A favorable airport is Frankfurt a.M. International Airport.

-
- We also recommend you purchase international insurance, especially health insurance!
 - We suggest you plan your arrival so that you don't miss the Welcome Program the TU is organizing. Starting on the first days of November and March, the university offers a four-week German language course. After this four-week-course, the Biology Department is offering a special laboratory course "Basic Lab Skill Course" (1 week) for international students. By successfully participating, you will be credited with 4 CPs. We highly recommend these.
 - Additional Welcome Days are meant to show you around campus (beginning at the *Karo 5* located at Karolinenplatz 5 in Darmstadt) and welcome you properly. That event offers a chance to meet other internationals early on and receive your dorm room key. Should you arrive even earlier than that, the cheapest temporary accommodations are: DJH Jugendherberge Darmstadt or the Ibis Hotel Darmstadt.

2.3 Things you should do after arriving in Darmstadt

- Contact your BioBuddy! He or she can be your best friend during your stay if you want to and can help you with any issues that come up along your way!
- If you're wondering how to get from the airport to Darmstadt then wonder no more. The bus line "Airliner" will take you directly from the airport (terminal 1, bus spot 14) to the city center of Darmstadt. For further information look at their website:
<https://www.heagmobi-bus.de/de/airliner>.
- We suggest you open a bank account if you haven't already. But as it is only our recommendation, you don't have to necessarily (**see chapter First steps**).
- Conclude a mobile phone contract. We can really recommend "ALDI talk", a prepaid tariff you can terminate easily and in a short notice (**see chapter First steps**).
- Check out all the BioBuddies events we'll plan for you and get to know all other exchange students from the marvelous field of biology! And don't worry, we'll always inform you of any events in advance, mostly via chat apps (WhatsApp in general). For an overview of our past events check out **chapter Impressions**.

3 TU Darmstadt

3.1 Where is what at TU Darmstadt?

The TU Darmstadt has different smaller and bigger campuses spread across Darmstadt (Figure 1). For you as a Biology student, the most important locations are Botanischer Garten, Lichtwiese and Stadtmitte. In TUCaN, you will find the information where your courses will take place. Here, the letter in front of the room number will tell you the campus you can find your room at (B = Botanischer Garten, L = Lichtwiese, S = Stadtmitte).

Maps can also be found here: <https://www.tu-darmstadt.de/universitaet/campus/index.en.jsp>.



Figure 1: Overview of the TU Darmstadt locations.

Botanischer Garten

The smallest but probably the most beautiful campus is called Botanischer Garten (botanical garden). All Biology-courses take place here, so you will spend most of your time at this location. As its name suggests, this campus is set right next to Darmstadt's botanical garden, so you might want to spend your lunchbreaks between its beautiful plants. But there are more important places to know at this campus (Figure 2).

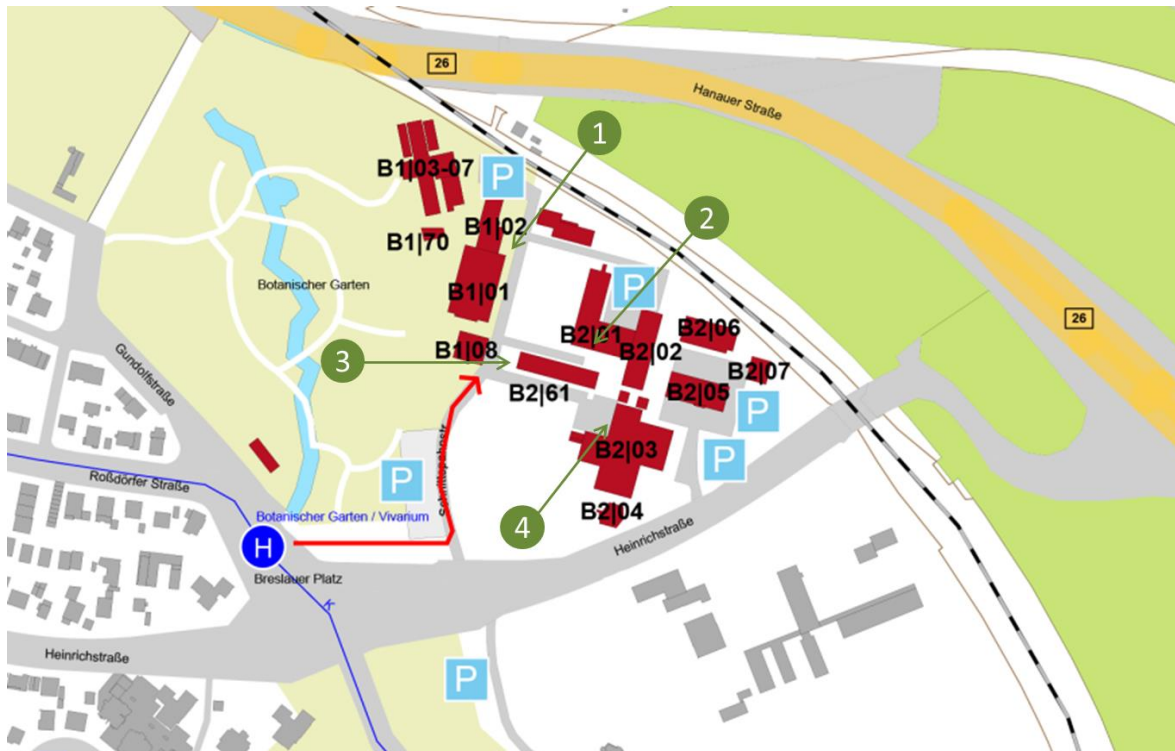


Figure 2: Most important locations at Botanischer Garten. Red: your way from the bus stop „Botanischer Garten/Vivarium“ (Bus K or KU) to the campus. 1) Small lecture hall and entrance to the botanical garden; 2) big lecture hall; 3) Bistro, Studienbüro and Fachschaft 4) Building where most lab-courses take place.

You can get to this campus by taking the bus K or KU from the middle of Darmstadt to „TU Lichtwiese/Mensa“. At the station „Botanischer Garten/Vivarium“, you leave the bus. The Botanischer Garten campus is a bit hidden but only a few minutes to walk from here. Just follow the red arrow on the map above or the other students and you will be there.

Most of your lectures will take place in the **big lecture hall** (Großer Hörsaal, B201/147). Smaller seminars sometimes take place at the **small lecture hall** (Kleiner Hörsaal, B101/52) located at the entrance to the **botanical garden**. Building B2|03 has several **labs** for students but some research groups also have their labs here. If you decide to study at TU Darmstadt, you will spend a lot of time here, as almost every module also has a practical part.

As Botanischer Garten is such a small campus, it doesn't have its own mensa, but we have the **Bistro**. Here, you can buy snacks (salads, sandwiches, but also cake or scrambled eggs) and drinks (bottled water as well as tea and coffee) and sit with your friends. Note that you will have to pay a little more if you don't pay with your Athene Card (see chapter Athene Card) and that they will only accept your Athene Card or cash for payment (no credit card). You can also charge your Athene Card here with cash (no coins and also no credit card).

In this building, right next to the Bistro, you will also find a place to sit with your fellow students and work on your projects (**learning center**). We also have a few computers here. Upstairs you will find the **Studienbüro**. The people there can help you with most questions concerning your study at TU Darmstadt (see chapter Important Contacts).

Lichtwiese

Lichtwiese is one of the two bigger campuses at our university. Most chemistry-related courses will take place here (Figure 3). You can get here by taking bus K or KU to „TU Lichtwiese/Mensa“ or walk from Botanischer Garten (about 15 minutes). This campus also has a small train station (TU Lichtwiese Bahnhof).



Figure 3: Most important locations at Lichtwiese. 1) library (ULB Lichtwiese), 2) Mensa with Bistro and Botanischer Garten, 3) Kekulé lecture hall.

Most lectures for Biologists take place at **Kekulé lecture hall** (L203/6).

Right next to the bus stop you will find the **mensa**, where you can get relatively cheap dishes. There are always vegetarian or vegan options for you if you like. There is also a **Bistro**, where you can buy snacks (essentially the same as at Botanischer Garten) or get a tasty breakfast. If you want to have a beer with your friends after a long day of studying, you will find the **Biergarten** here, too. There is also an **ATM** (Sparkasse) here, if you need to get cash.

The Lichtwiese campus is also home to one of our university's big **libraries**. You can read and borrow books here (for borrowing you will need your Athene Card) or just study in silence. There are also rooms for studying in groups you can book. The biggest lecture hall of our university can also be found in this building. Tipp for hot summer days: The library is also one of the buildings that has AC (most households in Germany don't), so it will always be cool in summer.

Stadtmitte

The other main campus of TU Darmstadt is called Stadtmitte (**Figure 4**). Most buildings can be reached from the station „Schloss“. Many buses and tram lines in Darmstadt can bring you there. Some bus lines also go to „Alexanderstraße/TU“.

At this campus you will find TU **administration** offices. Only a few – if any- of your lectures will take place here, but this is the central TU location and offers quite a few places of interest.

As a new student, the first place you might want to get to is **Karo 5**. If you are moving into one of the TU dormitories for example, you will most probably be picked up here.

Just like Lichtwiese, Stadtmitte also has a **Mensa** where you can eat together with your fellow students.

The other big **library** is located right across from the Mensa. Below it in the same building, there is another Bistro, where you can buy snacks, and some lockers you can use while you are in the library.

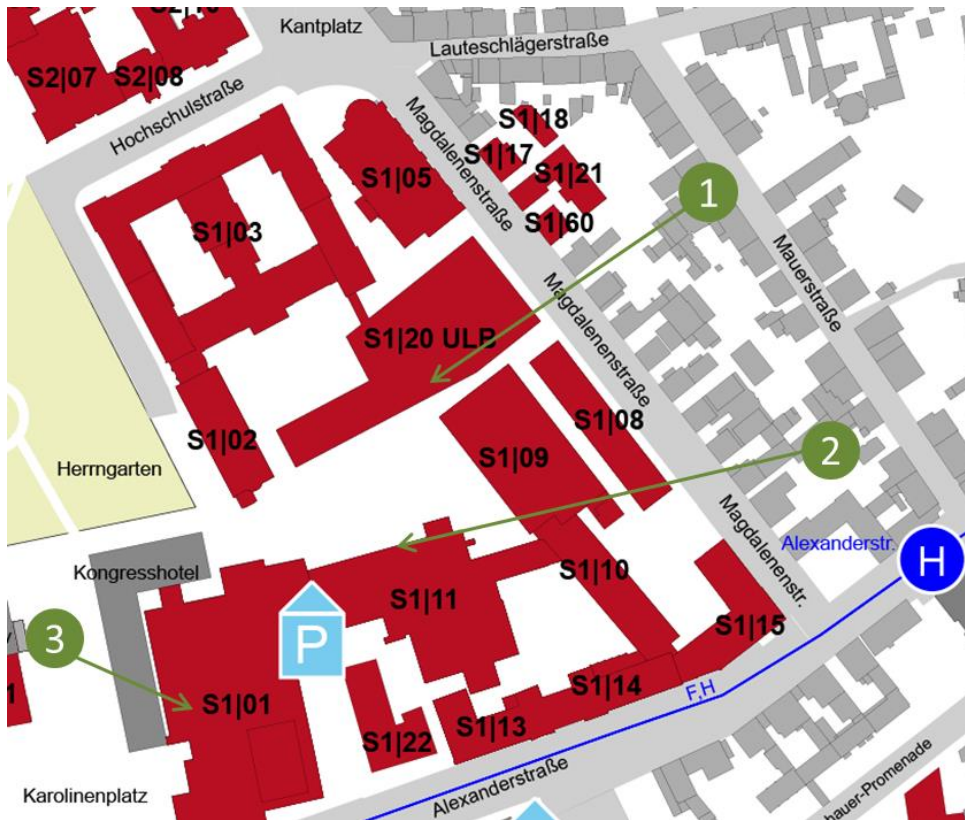
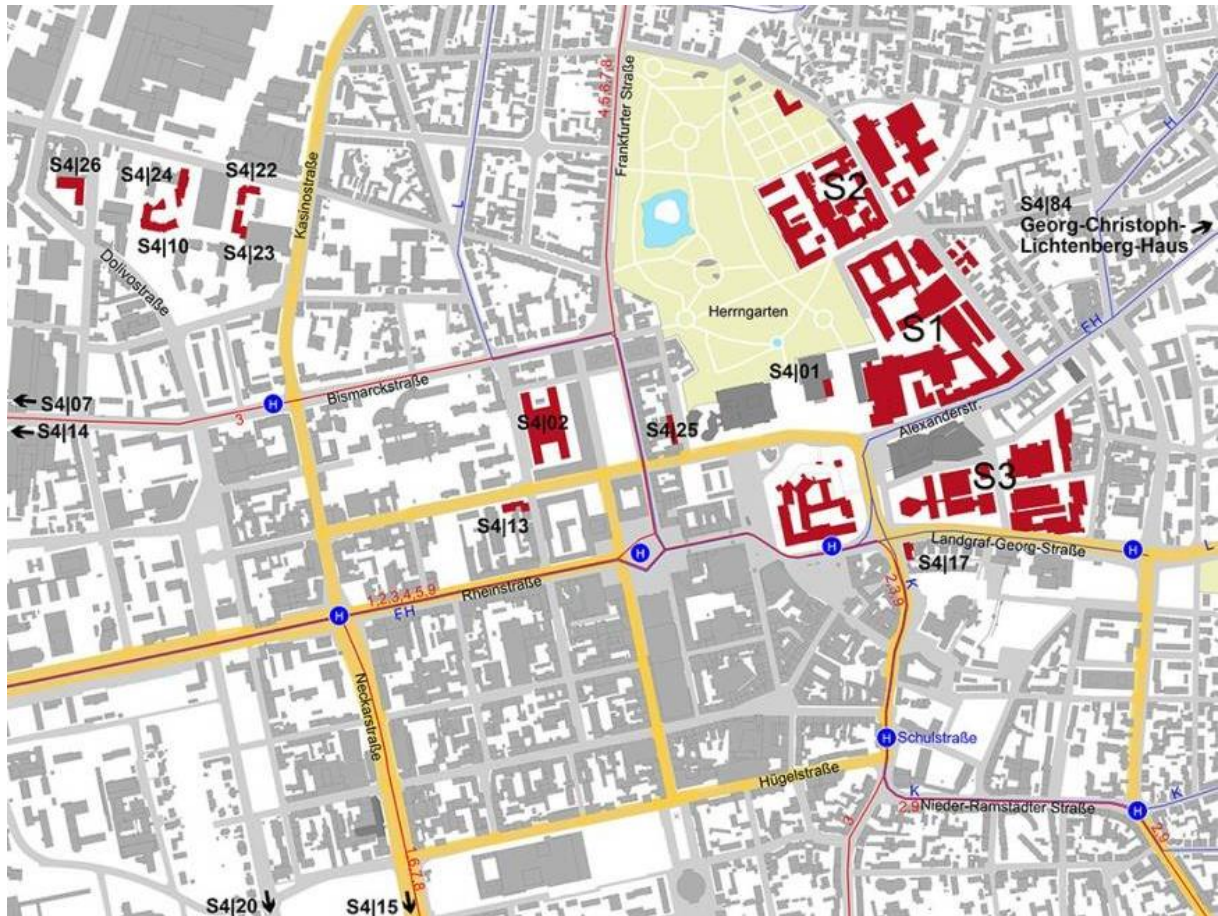


Figure 4: Overview of Stadtmitt Campus (above) and most important locations at Stadtmitt (below):

1) Library (ULB Stadtmitt), 2) Mensa, 3) Karo 5.

3.1.1 Libraries

The two libraries at Lichtwiese and Stadtmitte are the place to go if you want to find literature on your courses or if you are looking for a silent place to study at. You can borrow books with your Athene Card or book a small room to work on group projects with others (For further information check https://www.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/abisz/details_8790.de.jsp).

There is a huge amount of books (German as well as English) that you can read there or sometimes also borrow to study at home (search for books and articles here: <https://www.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/service/start/index.en.jsp>) Please note that the two libraries don't have the same books. In general, books on biology or chemistry are located at Lichtwiese, books about physics or mathematics can be found at Stadtmitte. If you searched for your book of interest on the website of ULB, it will also tell you where to find this book. You also have the option to get your book delivered to the other library if necessary.

3.1.2 Mensa

If you are looking for an opportunity to get affordable dishes in your break, the mensa at Lichtwiese or Stadtmitte is your place to go. Dishes vary but there is always a vegetarian or vegan option for you if you like. The menu and additional information can be found here: <https://studierendenwerkdarmstadt.de/hochschulgastronomie/speisekarten/stadtmitte/>. You can also download the mensa-app (Mensa Darmstadt Official) for your smartphone.

The Mensa is definitely not a restaurant to go for a romantic date or with your parents, but perfect for a lunch break with your friends.

3.1.3 Athene Card

Besides your Student-ID (see chapter Semester ticket) you will use as a ticket for public transport, you will also get your personal Athene Card (**Figure 5**) for borrowing books from the library or paying at the Mensa or Bistro. If you want to use the lockers at the libraries, you will also need this multifunctional chip card. It can be charged at different locations on every campus and then be used to pay for your meal.



Figure 5: Athene Card

For additional information see: <https://www.hrz.tu-darmstadt.de/id/athenekarte/index.en.jsp>

3.2 Important Contacts

Studienbüro (find the newest information on moodle)

PD Dr. Ulrike Homann (Study coordinator). Dr. Homann is the good soul at the department of biology. She is the first to talk to when you are having trouble with any kind of biology courses. However you might want to ask your fellow students first if they had similar problems and can help you.



Office hours: Wednesday 13:30 - 14:30, Thursday 11:00 - 12:00

Room: B2|61 101, Schnittpahnstraße 11, 64287 Darmstadt

homann-u@bio.tu-darmstadt.de

Tel. 06151-16-22053

Dr. Vera Bandmann (Foreign Student Advisor Faculty of Biology). Dr. Bandmann is the person responsible for foreign students in the biology department. She will sign your learning agreements and other formulars, help you with choosing your courses or a place for a laboratory internship. She will also register for your courses in TUCaN, so if you have problems with any of this she is the one to turn to for help.



Office hours: Tuesday 13:00 - 14:00

bandmann@bio.tu-darmstadt.de

Tel. 06151-16-22050

Karen Rätz will be responsible for everything concerning your exams. She will register you for Exams in english or for your thesis, but also for your courses in TUCaN (together with Dr. Bandmann). Moreover, if you want to change your groups or only do lectures instead of the whole module, she is the one to turn to. Ms. Rätz will also be responsible for your transcript of records.



Office hours: Monday + Thursday 13:30 - 14:30

raetz@bio.tu-darmstadt.de

Tel. 06151-16-22058

International Office TU Darmstadt

The International Office is responsible for nearly everything related to international studies. The AAA and the ERASMUS program are a part of it.

S1|01

www.tu-darmstadt.de/international/index.de.jsp

Karolinenplatz 5 64289 Darmstadt

AAA (Akademisches Auslandsamt)

The Akademisches Auslandsamt is responsible for all kinds of international certificates. You will also get information about application, enrollment and admission there. Inform yourself about the opening hours, as they are very short.

S1|01 R109 - 115

auslandsamt@pvw.tu-darmstadt.de

Karolinenplatz 5

www.tu-darmstadt.de/aaa/index.de.jsp

64289 Darmstadt

Erasmus Program

Here you can find all the information you will need as an ERASMUS student in Darmstadt.

S1|01 304

[www.tu-darmstadt.de/international/exchangestudents/
outbound/europe/erasmus/erasmus.de.jsp](http://www.tu-darmstadt.de/international/exchangestudents/outbound/europe/erasmus/erasmus.de.jsp)

Karolinenplatz 5

64289Darmstadt

TUtor International

Tutor International is a project to support international students at TU Darmstadt with their orientation and integration into student life and German society. The BioBuddies have cooperation with their team. They often organize great events, so visit their website (<https://www.tutor-international.de/asta/en/node/2404>) or their Facebook page: (<https://www.facebook.com/TUtorInternational/>) for more information.

S1|03 53 (Entrance through 56)

Telephone: 06151-1676964

ITT (Intercultural Tutor Team)

The ITT consist of students of the universities in Darmstadt who offer help with:

- Managing a good start
- Giving you an orientation about the university as well as about the town
- Helping you with official formalities
- Supporting you in case of language difficulties

They, too, organize events and workshops, so check out their website:

<https://studierendenwerkdarmstadt.de/en/interkulturelles/meeting-people-with-itt/itt/>

Mensa Stadtmitte

Alexanderstraße 4

64283 Darmstadt

Fachschaft (Student Council)

The student council biology is not only there for international students but for all biology students at TU Darmstadt. They are responsible for:

- Mediating in case there is a major problem with a lecturer or professor
- Looking after the printer in the learning center
- Organizing orientation weeks for bachelor and master students
- Representing the students when decisions for the department are made

At the beginning of every winter semester (October) they organize an **orientation week** (Orientierungswoche, short OWO) for new students. There you can get in contact with the other students and get to know the city and the university. You don't have to register for OWO, just join in if you want and leave whenever you feel like it.

There are also other events organized by the student council, so check their Facebook page now and then if you are interested: <https://de-de.facebook.com/FSBioTUD/>

The Student Council has its room right next to the Studienbüro at Botanischer Garten.

Building B2|61

fsbio@bio.tu-darmstadt.de

3.2.1 Emergency Numbers

In Germany, there are two emergency numbers even children know: 112 and 110. You can call both of them without having to pay anything, from stationary telephones as well as your mobile phone. **112** is the number to call if you need an ambulance or if there is a fire. In case you might need the help of the police, you can call **110**.

In any case, you should tell them :

Where are you?

Who is calling?

What happened?

How many People are affected/injured?

Wait for any questions they might have!

If you need medical help, but the situation is clearly not this threatening, you can call **116117**. They will also help you to find a doctor on call duty in your area if you urgently need one while yours is closed.

If someone was poisoned, you can call **+49 6131-19240** (only within Hessen, other regions might vary) to find help.

In case an emergency happens while you are in the lab, you also have to call additional numbers. Before every lab course you will be informed what to do in case of emergency, and your supervisors will know what to do, too.

Ambulance and fire department	112
Police	110
Medical help	116117
Poison emergency call (Hessen)	+49 6131-19240

4 Studying and Exams at TU Darmstadt

4.1 Bachelor of Science Biology

Bachelor studies are divided into two parts (Figure 6). The first one is made up of the first four semesters (2 years), in which you will complete the compulsory courses. They cover various aspects of the natural sciences from mathematics, physics and biochemistry to classical subjects like biodiversity and trends in research worldwide such as genetics. Moreover, you are free to choose other interdisciplinary courses from the module catalog, in which you are interested.

CP	1. Sem	2. Sem	3. Sem	4. Sem	5. Sem	6. Sem	
1	10-11-0001 Struktur und Funktion der Organismen 9 CP	10-11-0003 Biodiversität und Phylogenie 9 CP	10-11-0005 Physiologie der Organismen 9 CP	10-11-0007 Ökologie und Evolution 9 CP	Vertiefungsbereich 4 x Biolog. Wahlpflichtmodule je 8CP optional: Ersatz eines Wahlpflichtmoduls durch 8CP fachübergreifende Vertiefung		
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9	10-11-0002 Zellbiologie 9 CP	10-11-0004 Genetik 9 CP	10-11-0006 Physiologie der Mikroorganismen 9 CP	10-11-0008 Entwicklung und Stabilität 9 CP			
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							
17							
18	10-11-0016 Kursbetreuung 5CP						
19	07-01-0303 Allgemeine Chemie 6 CP	Fachüberg. Lehrveranstaltungen Insg. 4 CP		10-11-0017 Mathematische Biologie 4CP	10-11-00040 Berufsorientiertes Forschungspraktikum 9CP		
20							
21		07-05-0305 Organische Chemie 10CP	05-91-3055 Physik für Biologen vl+ue 5CP pr 3CP	Bachelor Thesis 12CP			
22							
23	07-07-0307 Biochemie vl+ue 5CP pr 3CP						
24							
25	04-00-0128 Mathematik und Statistik für Biologen 6 CP						
26							
27							
28							
29			10-11-0014 Team & Präs. (II)				
30							
31							
32			10-11-0014 Team & Präs. (I)				

Figure 6: Study plan Bachelor of Science Biology. Courses in the uneven semesters are offered in the winter semester (e.g. Cell biology, Physiology of Organisms) and courses in the even semesters in the summer semester (e.g. genetics, ecology). All courses are offered once a year.

The lectures and seminars are usually held in the morning and the attendance is not mandatory. The tutorials and lab practices in the afternoon are usually divided into at least two groups. During those you will work along with your tutors and supervisors and will have a chance to ask specific questions. In the lab practices you will conduct experiments and write protocols explaining the results. You can easily combine modules from different semesters. Typically two exam dates are offered, one at the beginning of the break after the semester and one at the beginning of the new semester.

In the second part of the Bachelor program you will have to attend four optional courses (two semesters/ one year). For three weeks you will attend only tutorials which will cover one topic each. At the end of each period you will write an exam or sometimes even write a protocol and hold a presentation. There is a further compulsory course that involves becoming a tutor for one of the modules from the first four semesters. This is a valuable experience helping you to develop your soft skills. You will have to complete a research internship in six weeks. You can do this at a workgroup at the university, at a company or in a research institute. The Bachelor thesis is also worth mentioning as it is the last part of the biology bachelor program. It is conducted ten weeks after its registration.

The person to contact regarding questions about your study plan is the study coordinator, Ms. Ulrike Homann or Ms. Vera Bandmann (Foreign student advisor).

It is of great importance for you to know that most of the bachelor courses offered in the department of biology are held in German. This means, if you're planning on studying here, you should know, that you will be hearing only German in almost every module! The lab practices are usually in German, although most of the supervisors can speak English and will be able to explain anything you did not understand. However, don't worry! The BioBuddies will help you with language difficulties as good as they can. The exams can be conducted in English, after an arrangement with the professor. This means with no basic knowledge of German, it will be difficult but not impossible to study in the Biology department, the readings are also available in English (for example, in the library). So you can prepare well for the exams in English.

Helpful links:

More information about the Bachelor Sc. Biology:

https://www.bio.tu-darmstadt.de/studieren/studienangebot/bachelor_biologie/bachelor.de.jsp

4.2 Master of Science Biology

The Master (four semesters) is characterized by three-four block courses that are similar to the block courses at the end of the Bachelor program. The Master courses last six weeks and you will fully focus on a specific topic and you will work closely with people from the working groups. Moreover, you can participate in several smaller courses (Theoretical courses) and intensify your knowledge. Most of them consist of only a lecture or a seminar (with a final exam). There is a huge variety of courses you can participate in. The courses in the Master are mainly offered in English. Another part of the Master's program is being the supervisor for one of the Bachelor block courses. To get your degree you will have to take a research internship and write a thesis (Figure 7).

CP	1. Sem	2. Sem	3. Sem	4. Sem
1	4 x Wahlpflichtmodule MTB1-MTB50 je 15 CP		MTB 21 Forschungs- praktikum 15CP	
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11	optional: 3 x Wahlpflichtmodule MTB1-MTB50 je 15 CP + 1x Fachübergreifende/Biologische Vertiefung 15 CP		MTB 20 Kursbetreuung 9 CP	MTB22 Master Thesis 30CP
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
21		MTB 18 - 3CP Biol. Vertiefung		
22				
23				
24				
25				
26				
27				
28				
29				
30				

Figure 7: Study plan Master of Science Biology.

Helpful links:

More information
about the Master Sc.
Biology

http://www.bio.tu-darmstadt.de/studieren/studienangebot/master_technische_biology/mastertechnische

4.3 TUCaN – Campus Management System

TUCaN is our campus management system, where you register for courses and examinations. Usually you register for exams in the study office. The general deadlines shall not apply to you. Don't panic! The BioBuddies and Ms. Homann help you, do not hesitate to ask us. It is important to know how the TUCaN system works. Then it is easier for you to keep track of your courses.

Additionally, you can use the TUCaN-App on your Smartphone (Figure 8). It's an easy way to have an overview of your courses and exams. Furthermore, you will find the offered meals of the student canteens (*Mensa*) easily.

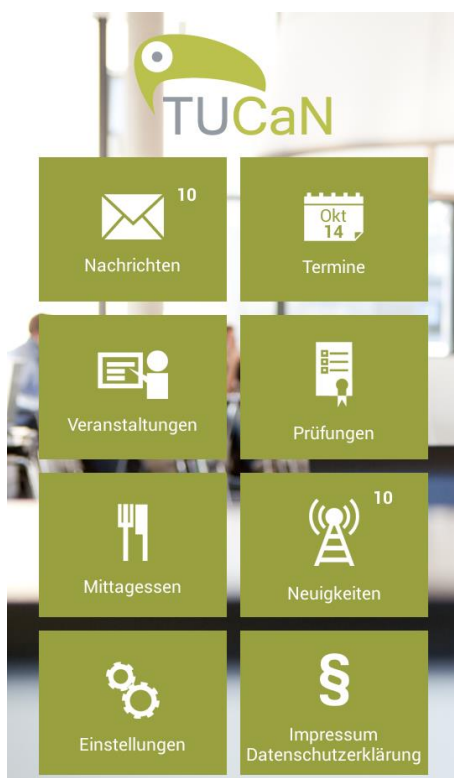


Figure 8: Screenshot TUCaN-App.

Helpful links:

More information about TUCaN: https://www.tu-darmstadt.de/studieren/tucan_studienorganisation/index.en.jsp

Download TUCaN-App for Android:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.datenlotsen.campusnet.tuda>

Download TUCaN-App for iOS:

<https://apps.apple.com/de/app/tucan-tu-darmstadt/id1066176732>

4.4 Moodle

Moodle is an additional Learning Management System, which is designed for virtual learning and workspaces. Some professors are offering online lectures via moodle (or online tests).

Helpful links:

More information about Moodle:

https://www.e-learning.tu-darmstadt.de/werkzeuge/moodle/moodle_faq/moodle_faq_studierende/index.de.jsp

Login Moodle: <https://moodle.tu-darmstadt.de/>

4.5 Courses in English

4.5.1 Bachelor

All bachelor courses are in German. Some lectures might be held in English, but that is rather rare. It is however possible to have an (oral) English exam. Here is a shortlist of courses that according to our information are in English:

- Zellbiologie (Lectures are partly in English, exam can be in English)
- Molekulare Zellbiologie (Lectures and seminar presentations are mostly in English)
- Genetik (Lectures are partly in English)
- Tech. Genetik (Lectures upon consultation in English, part Prof. Göringer)

Usually, it is possible to ask for an (oral) English exam. It's best, if you introduce yourself in the first lecture and ask the professor kindly for an (oral) English exam. Don't forget to remind the professor several weeks before the actual exam! Please inform yourself at the beginning of your semester which exam you want to sit so that there will be no complications relating to your return flight. It is easier to fill out the file "Registration of an oral examination" with the help of your Buddy. You will need the signature of the examiner. Afterwards, the student office Biology will approve your application.

Helpful links:

Registration of an oral examination:

<https://www.bio.tu->

[darmstadt.de/media/projektname/studiensekretariat/examination_english/Registration_of_an_oral_examination_-_Anmeldung_zur_muendlichen_Pruefung_englisch.pdf](https://www.bio.tu-darmstadt.de/media/projektname/studiensekretariat/examination_english/Registration_of_an_oral_examination_-_Anmeldung_zur_muendlichen_Pruefung_englisch.pdf)

4.5.2 Master

The Master's courses are mostly in English or can easily be switched to English, if foreign students are present. The seminars are usually held in English and you can rework with English literature. Most supervisors in the lab speak English and you can ask for an (oral) English exam as in the Bachelor courses. Anyway, you will need knowledge of German to organize your studies.

5 First steps

5.1 Visa and Registration Office

You need a visa if you are not an EU citizen to register yourself in Germany. As an EU citizen you have to apply for a visa after three months. In any case you have to register yourself within 7 days after your entry. At the registration office you have to register yourself as soon as you move to Darmstadt. There you will also get the *Einwohnermeldebescheinigung* (Residents' Registration Certificate) which you will need, for example, to open a bank account or to sign a mobile contract. It is important, that you take a valid passport and your rental agreement with you. Please save the Residents' Registration Certificate document until at least you return to your home country. Because many students are moving to Darmstadt at that time, you might have to wait for quite a while. You can make an appointment online to save yourself a lot of time. It might also be helpful if you take your Buddy with you when you go to the Registration office, because a lot of the civil servants don't speak English.

Online appointment:

<https://www.darmstadt.de/rathaus/online-dienste/terminvergabe-einwohnermeldeamt>

Office hours:

Monday 07:30 - 12:30

Tuesday 07:30 - 12:30

Wednesday 08:30 - 12:30 and 14:00 - 18:00

Thursday 07:30 - 12:30

Friday 07:30 - 12:30

Adress:

Stadthaus Grafenstraße

Grafenstraße 30

64283 Darmstadt

Telefon: 06151 / 13-3222

Newest information:

<https://www.meldebox.de/umzug-darmstadt/einwohnermeldeamt/darmstadt-81031/>

5.2 Bank-account

The next important step is to set up a bank account. Having a German account will save you a lot of money because you will be charged a lot of fees for using a foreign card at the cash machines. There are a lot of different banks in Germany in which you can open your bank account. The biggest bank groups in Darmstadt are Sparkasse, Volksbank and Commerzbank. Online bank groups might also be interesting for you. Before selecting which bank you would like to open an account, it would be beneficial for you to visit each bank's website and look up which one suits your needs best. There are many options to get a free bank account as a student, so take a little time for research here. This is an important step because there are a lot of differences between the bank groups. When you decide to open an account you must have the following documents with you:

- valid passport
- residence authorization
- registration card
- student card or the acknowledgment of TU Darmstadt (Students normally have to pay less or even nothing for an account)

5.3 Mobile contract

The last step is to get a German SIM card. It will help you to stay in contact with other exchange students, your Buddy and any other people you might meet in Germany. To get a SIM card you will need a German address. All the other steps for getting a SIM card you can find on the Internet. In Germany there are prepaid contracts and 'all-inclusive' contracts. You should think about how much, how long, when and where you are going to use the Internet. Free WiFi is available in all areas of TU Darmstadt which means that you do not necessarily need to include 3G in your contract. Note that the mobile internet is pretty expensive in Germany compared to other countries.

Always think about the length of your stay, a lot of 'all-inclusive' contracts have different cancellation periods. In these cases, it will always be easier to get a prepaid SIM card, because they do not come with cancellation periods or cancellation fees. Many discounters offer prepaid SIM cards with good conditions.

6 How to find a flat?

6.1 What to expect?

The most common form of living for students in Germany is the concept of a shared flat. That means that two to six or more people live in one flat. This enables you to pay a lower rent than you would on your own as much as the water, electricity and internet bills. Rooms in these so-called *Studenten-WG* cost usually about 300-400 € per month.

These student-flats certainly provide you with the benefit of always having someone around to ask for help with personal matters. The rooms are being put on the internet as soon as they are available. If you choose to apply for one of those, you will have to go through a roommate casting in which you just have to introduce yourself. This offers you as much as your potential new roommates the chance to see if you get along well. Sometimes, if you have not yet arrived in Germany, these castings can be held over Skype or other online video chat platforms.

Therefore, if you want to get invited to a casting you will need to add a brief text to your application about what you are studying, where you are from, your hobbies, how long your stay will be and if you have any experience with shared flats. All that is of great interest for your future flatmates.

6.2 Where to look?

Overview of all options (€=cheap, €€€€=expensive)

Accommodation	Website	Details	Cost
Student dorm	studentenwerkdarmstadt.de	Not all rooms are furnished; multiple roommates possible	€-€€
wg-gesucht	wg-gesucht.de/en/	Rooms for interim rent are mostly furnished; multiple roommates possible	€-€€
Facebook offers	facebook.com/	Rooms for interim rent are mostly furnished; multiple roommates possible	€-€€
Airbnb	airbnb.de	Furnished; calculate price per month	€€€
Hotels	trivago.de	Calculate the price per night	€€€€

You have several options at hand. On the one hand, you could try to get a room in one of the student dorms. They are state-subsidized and mostly cheaper than other rentable rooms. You should sign yourself up on the waiting list as soon as possible (for that visit their websites: <https://studieren-denwerkdarmstadt.de/wohnservice/wohnheime/>).

There you can also look up the different properties of each dorm establishment. You get to register for up to three different dorms. The prices vary from around 250€ in older establishments till up to 450€ in newer ones (Figure 9).

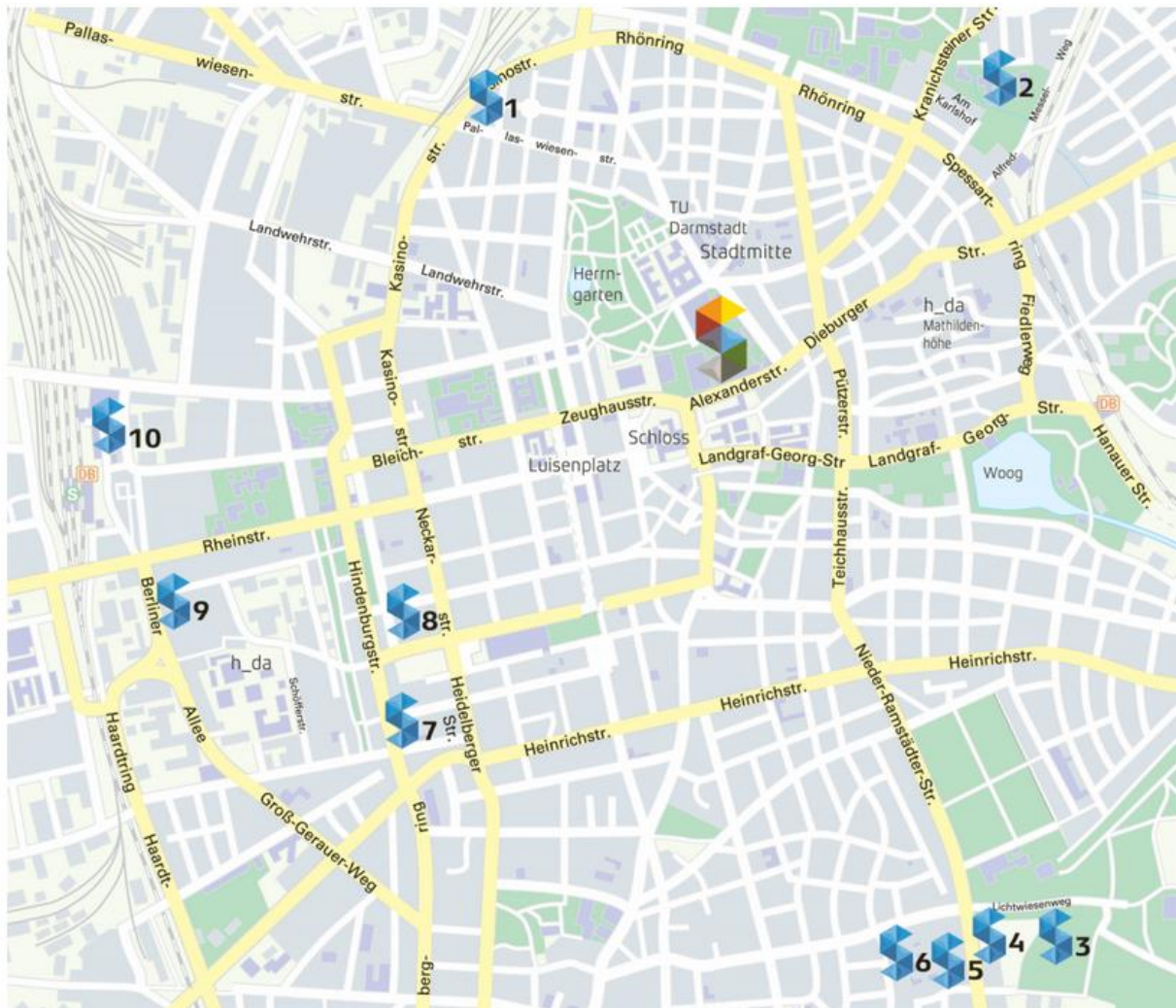


Figure 9: Land map of dorm rooms in Darmstadt. Here you see the location of all ten dorm rooms in Darmstadt. For further information look at <https://studierendenwerkdarmstadt.de/wohnservice/wohnheime/>.

On the other hand, you can try to get a room in a private student shared flat, so-called WG, where several students share a flat. If you prefer private accommodation you should start looking online at www.wg-gesucht.de (Figure 10). This is the most reliable website for that matter. Using the website's filter system, you can find suitable rooms in shared flats. Plus, you can post a public announcement that you are in search of a room, making it easier for others to find you and possibly offer you a room. But do not overdo it. Keep any info about yourself brief and put only the most important details about yourself in it. Landlords probably get hundreds of applications and won't read yours if it appears too long and profound.

Alternatively, you can join Facebook groups as well, seeing as there are also offers for rooms or flats to be found. Some of the most helpful groups are the following: “Darmstadt International”, “WG & Wohnung Darmstadt gesucht” and “Wohnungsbörse Frankfurt – Mainz – Darmstadt”.

Both options come with different variables. Another tip from us is to look at the state of rooms. Some come furnished, some don’t. Look for those simple details as well.

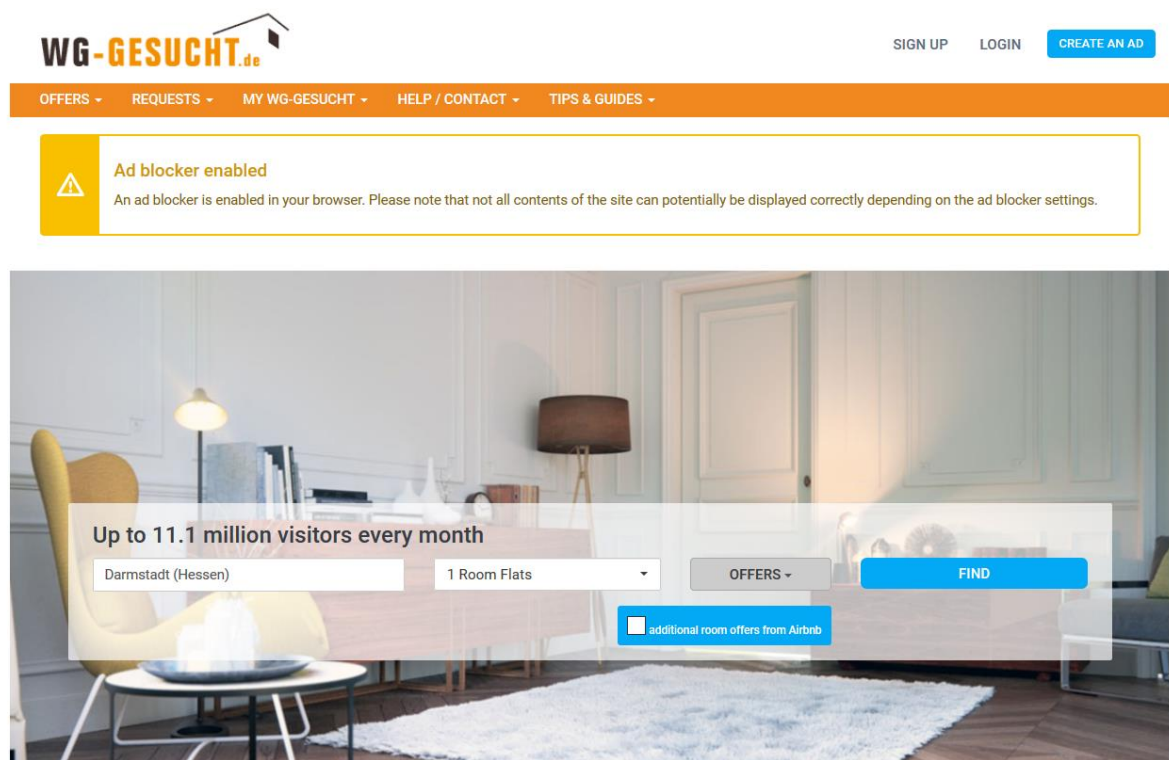


Figure 10: Screenshot wg-gesucht. Here you define filters and look for rooms in shared flats. For further information visit <https://www.wg-gesucht.de/en/>.

7 Cultural shock

7.1 What does this mean?

No matter which country you go to, you will always find yourself surrounded by some traditions or customs you would consider unusual. To avoid potential cultural shocks, because Germans may appear odd to the outside world, we provide you a basic input on how Germans function. Mind you, this does not apply to each and every German citizen. The following habits are just meant to ease your way into the German culture!

- ✓ German people may be very direct and forward. But mostly in a polite manner!
- ✓ Beer. Ah yes, beer is essential to Germans. Haven't tried it? No problem, beer is being served everywhere. They sure love their beer. Another drink typical for the region Hessen where Darmstadt is located is the apple cider. Give that a shot!
- ✓ Bread. You will find so many different variations of bread and good ones for that matter. Nobody knows their bread as the Germans do!
- ✓ One well-known stereotype is the punctuality. And it wasn't made up. However, when meeting with friends you don't need to keep a close eye on the watch!
- ✓ All grocery stores are closed on Sundays. Luckily, one "REWE" supermarket near the central station still has open Sundays. Plus, some gas stations serve basic food products if you didn't manage to buy your supplies till Saturday. Unlike the supermarket, they do tend to be a bit pricy.
- ✓ Waste separation is a big deal in Germany. They write sustainability in capital letters. Garbage is being separated into paper, plastic and metal, organic and residual waste!
- ✓ Don't be bothered by the Germans complaining about the little things in life.

-
- ✓ The weather in Germany is inconsistent. Some winters are brutally cold, yet without snow. Nevertheless, we suggest you bring your warmest clothes for the winter semester. But then again, summers in Germany tend to be warm, at least in the last few years. Bring your swimsuits.
 - ✓ Superficiality and carelessness are not very appreciated properties. But then again, in no country they are. In general, always be kind and sincere and you'll experience the same treatment.
 - ✓ German bureaucrats sure love their deadlines and appointments. Make sure to uphold them, as the bureaucracy works really efficiently in Germany.
 - ✓ When offered food, help or any other services in Germany you needn't be too polite and decline them. Accept anything offered and of use to you.
 - ✓ You want to send your family back home a postcard or package from Germany. No big deal, just make sure the addressing of said object is proper. In Germany the recipient's address should be placed in the lower right corner of the envelope or package and marked as such. If you will you also may add your name and current address on the upper left corner of the envelope or packaging.
 - ✓ Always keep in mind to be open-minded and tolerant. The German population is various. Do not try to impose your culture onto anyone just because you may think it has better qualities. Accept and embrace differences. For example, most Germans don't tend to speak to pure strangers on the bus. Is that a common thing for you back home? Don't be surprised or offended if not all Germans are open to spontaneous conversations with foreigners.

8 Darmstadt

Darmstadt is a city of about 150.000 inhabitants. Thus it is the fourth largest city of the state Hessen and is located in the center of the Rhein-Main-region. Its three universities and various research centers like GSI Helmholtzzentrum or Fraunhofer institute make Darmstadt a city of science. Darmstadt is also known as the city of Art Nouveau, which can be seen at the Mathildenhöhe. Due to this diversity you can always find something to broaden your knowledge with outside university.



Figure 11: Luisenplatz Darmstadt: Luisenplatz is in the center of Darmstadt.

8.1 Public transportation

8.1.1 Semester ticket

When paying your semester fee you'll receive a semester ticket for public transport in Darmstadt (PT). It is even printed on the back of your student ID so you always have it with you. With it you can use all regional trains, subways and commuter trains, trams and buses throughout the territory of the Rhine-Main Transport Association (RMV) for free. The RMV is one of the largest transport networks in Europe and comprises the whole of South and Central Hessian. On the following map, you can see how far you can travel for free with your ticket (Figure 12). It is also always possible to acquire connection cards for the ticket to be valid further.



Figure 12: Area of validity. This map shows you how far you can travel with your semester ticket without extra costs.

8.1.2 Call a bike – bike rental system

The bike rental system is a part of your status as a student and similar to the semester ticket. After you register you can use three bikes as often as you want for one hour for free. If you use a bike longer than one hour small fees apply. Therefore you have to provide a bank account during the registration. You get an account with this special pricing model after registration with your @stud.tu-darmstadt.de email address.

Use this link for sign-up:

https://www.callabike-interaktiv.de/kundenbuchung/process.php?proc=online_anmeldung&f_request=J&f=500

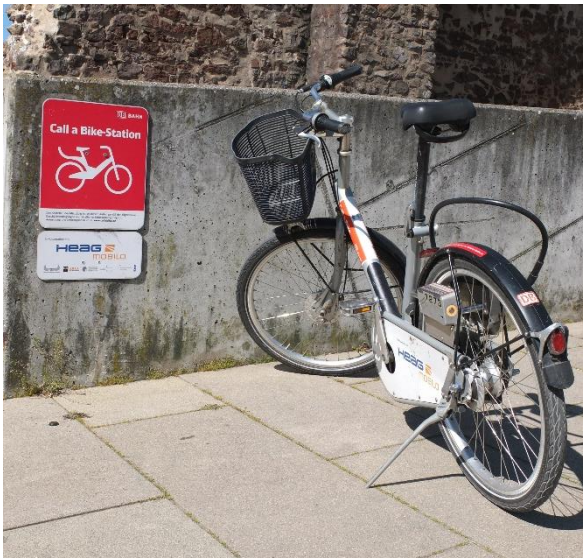


Figure 13: Call a bike station.

Lend Out

Option 1: Download the app for Android, iPhone, Windows Phone or Black-berry to your mobile device. You can choose a Call a Bike in the app. The app will show you a four-digit code. Open the lock cover and type it in on the touch screen. The lock will open, then you can pull out the bold and fix it to the bike's frame. You are ready to start.

Option 2: There is a phone number in a red box on every single bike like 069/427277xxxx. You call that number and you will hear four-digit code. Open the lock cover and type it in on the touch screen. The lock will open, then you can pull out the bold and fix it to the bike's frame. You are ready to start.

Pause

You can send your bike to Fahrpause to have a short break of your ride to enter a supermarket for example. Lock the bike with the bold and press the mechanic lock button. There will be the question "Fahrpause?" and you confirm with "Ja". The bike is now locked and can not be used by anyone else. When you have finished your break open the lock with the same code like before and your ride goes on. Please notice: The minutes are counted like normal riding in the break so don't ride or pause longer than 60 minutes.

Hand Back

Once you want to finish your ride go to a station, lock the bike with the bold and press the mechanic lock button. If you open the display cover there will be the question "Fahrpause?". Say "No" to finish the ride. A bike can only be handed back at an official station. If you finish your ride somewhere else there will be extra fees of at least 5€.

It could be helpful to watch this video on YouTube to understand how the bikes work:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCX0nuNFkvM>

8.1.3 zwanzig° - bicycle repair shop of TU Darmstadt

zwanzig° is the self-help bicycle repair shop of TU Darmstadt. You have a problem with your bicycle but no possibility to solve it on your own? You bought a new spare part and you want to install it but you can't do it at home? So come to us and you get help. Zwanzig° has everything you need to repair your bike: tools, space and experts, who can help you. You can borrow the necessary tools and work on-site.

Important: You can get help for free but the employees won't repair your bike. For reasons of liability, this is not possible. zwanzig° is not only intended for students of TU Darmstadt, but it is available for all interested persons while the opening hours. Opening hours can be checked at Asta Homepage: <https://www.asta.tu-darmstadt.de/asta/en/fahrradwerkstatt>

8.2 Groceries and Shopping

In your first days, it will be important to know where you can find important things like food, clothes and other stuff. Therefore, here are some suggestions for you:

Groceries:

In Germany, there are many different supermarkets, which differ in price. **Rewe** is one of the biggest supermarkets and offers a very large selection of food and often fresh meat and cheese. **Aldi** and **Lidl** have almost as much choice, but are a little cheaper. If you prefer to save money, you can shop at **Netto**, a discount store that offers very reasonable prices. **Tegut** and **Alnatura** offer many organic products as well as products you don't get in every store, but are also a lot more expensive.

Clothes:

We have a large selection of clothing stores in the center of Darmstadt. For a shopping trip, you can go to **Luisencenter** or stroll in the surrounding streets. You can buy slightly cheaper clothes at **H&M** or **C&A**.

Toiletries:

If you need toiletries or cosmetic products you can go to **DM** or **Rossmann**. There you will find everything that has to do with body care or make-up. Both shops also offer a photo service where you can print photos and take them with you, and some shelves with organic products.

Furniture:

If you need furniture or small items for your shared room or apartment, a trip to **IKEA** is a good idea. The Swedish company offers a variety of furniture, decorative items and much more (e. g. plants, lamps, crockery, etc).

Online shopping:

With **amazon.de** you can order many things and have them delivered directly to your home. You will receive almost everything from an order value of 29 € free of shipping costs. If you have no problem using used items, you can always check **ebay.de** to see if someone is selling what you need used and cheaper. On **ebay-kleinanzeigen.de** you will find many sellers from Darmstadt, so that you can have a look at the products yourself before buying them.

Another way to easily buy used products is through a **Facebook group**. You usually have to send a request to the group admin. It is recommended that you have somewhere in your profile that you are living in Darmstadt.

Groups are for example "BIETE/SUCHE/TAUSCHE/VERSCHENKE... Darmstadt" and "FREE YOUR STUFF".

The BioBuddies Organization-team also stores items from former Buddies, which you can borrow for your time in Germany. So if you need some of these items, it's worth asking before you buy them.

8.3 Leisure time

8.3.1 Sports

The sports offered by the **Unisport center** of the Technical University is enormous. Beside all ball sports or aerobics you can participate in modern and engaging courses like bokwa, parkour or even quidditch. For students of the TU Darmstadt most of the sports courses are for free although some require a small fee. If you want to participate in a popular sport course, you should act quickly because the places are limited. For further information check out: www.usz.tu-darmstadt.de

A lot of the courses take place at Hochschulstadion at Lichtwiese or around it.

8.3.2 Culture and sightseeing

In Darmstadt and the surrounding area there are many places you can visit. In the following some of them are described in more detail.

Hessisches Landesmuseum:

The museum is located in the center of Darmstadt, right next to the Herrngarten. It houses many different exhibitions, which change with time. The entrance fee for students is 4€ and it is worth a visit.

More information:

<https://www.hlmd.de/index.html>



Figure 14: Hessisches Landesmuseum.

Parks:

If you like to be out in nature and go for a walk, Darmstadt with its parks is the perfect place for that! The Herrngarten is very popular in summer, when the weather is good, a lot of different people meet here. The proximity to the campus Stadtmitte is also very suitable for a break from studying.

The Rosenhöhe is located behind the Ostbahnhof and is very nice for long walks. There is also a farm that offers a free tour with alpacas and llamas every Sunday. We have already done this as a group event with the Buddies and will gladly repeat it. If you would like to visit the farm yourself, you can find more information here: <https://kubyundgasch.de/events/category/lama-und-alpakaspaziergang/>.

Swimming:

In summer it can be over 30°C and many people are attracted to the water. In Darmstadt there is the Großer Woog, a lake in the middle of Darmstadt. It is good for swimming and is also home to many species of animals such as waterfowl, ducks and grey herons.

If you prefer to go to a swimming pool, there are several possibilities. In the Hochschulstadion next to the Lichtwiese campus there is not only a swimming pool, but also sports facilities and volleyball courts. As a student, you can go to the stadium for free in summer with your Athene Card. There are scanners to the right of the normal entrance, so you don't have to queue. The Jugendstilbad is an indoor swimming pool, where you can not only swim, but also relax very well. It offers saunas, massages and steam baths, but it is more expensive.

Frankenstein Castle:

Close to Darmstadt is Frankenstein Castle, a castle that has existed for at least 800 years and offers a great view of the surrounding area. You can reach it either by car or a short hike if you take a tram to Eberstadt and walk from there for about an hour. On Halloween the castle is transformed into a place of horror.

With a ticket you can take part in the creepy events for which the castle is very famous (<https://frankenstein-halloween.de/>).



Figure 15: Frankenstein Castle.

Frankfurt:

Frankfurt is the largest Hessian city and offers a wide range of activities. With the semester ticket you can travel there for free in only 20 minutes. Besides countless restaurants and shopping possibilities there is a lot to see. The Frankfurt Zoo is very nice for a trip with friends or on your own. The botanical garden Palmgarten is also very suitable for long walks. If you want to learn something about Frankfurt's history, it is worth visiting the old town in the heart of Frankfurt. There you will also find the "Römer", the city's town hall. Besides typical souvenirs, you can also buy regional specialties like apple wine and sausages.



Figure 16: Frankfurt.

8.3.3 Party

Darmstadt is a small city but, of course, you can find some places to shake your booty. Most of the venues are in the center of Darmstadt. So you can travel there on foot. To know what's going on in Darmstadt you can check online: www.partyamt.de

Bars:

Well-known and popular bars in Darmstadt are, among others, **Hobbit** and **Hotzenplotz**, where you can get something delicious to eat as well as the city drink Laternchen. Especially in the Hobbit, there is not much space, so better reserve a table if you want to stop by.

The **Havana** is located in the Martinsviertel like the other two bars and offers very good Mexican food and a large selection of cocktails. Watch out for promotions like Happy Hours, which you can find on their website.

At **Sausalitos** you can also get good food and cocktails. On Monday you just pay half the price for each dish!

The **An Sibir** is an Irish bar that is well known for its weekly karaoke evenings every Thursday. You can sign up for a song yourself or just spend a nice evening there and listen to the singing of others. In the last few semesters, An Sibir has become a popular meeting place for us Buddies, so someone will usually want to accompany you if you ask!

Shots and **Das Labor** are Shotbars in Darmstadt. The shots are cheaper if you order ten at once and in Das Labor you have a very large selection of more than 300 shots, none of which you know what's inside! Especially try the Mexikaner which is a shot from Darmstadt.

The **Krone** is a very popular bar right next to Schloss, where you can drink beer and play table soccer. It also has a club next door with two floors where the biologists' parties often take place.

Clubs:

As clubs next to the Krone, the **Centralstation** and the **Schlosskeller** have proven to be a good choice. Moreover, **806 qm** next to Karo5 is an option to party. On the Internet, you can quickly find out what kind of parties are held there.

The student council (Fachschaft) of our faculty organize amazing parties - at least one in the semester. They also organize round tables, a summer party, a Christmas lecture and games evenings. You are cordially invited to join these awesome events.

For more information check their Facebook page or see the posters around the buildings of the department (see chapter Important Contacts).

8.3.4 Cinemas

In Darmstadt, the main cinemas are found downtown (Helia, Rex and Pali, which are located close to the main square) as well as close to the main station, where a big cinema offers 3D films too. You can check the program and book tickets online at www.kinos-darmstadt.de. Additionally the movie community at the TU provides cinema shows at the Audimax. However, no current films are played. A big advantage of those is that the tickets are cheap and you can bring your own food and drinks. For more information check here: <http://www.filmkreis.tu-darmstadt.de>

As a student of the TU Darmstadt you are allowed to visit the state theatre for free as many times as you like. Here you will find out how it works: <https://www.asta.tu-darmstadt.de/asta/en/node/61>

9 Impressions

9.1 Previous events

This is the last chapter of our brochure. Now, it's time to share some of our previous events with you. We are looking forward to seeing you soon and create unforgettable memories with you!



Figure 17: 2014 – German soccer (left). 2016 – cooking german food (right). 2019 – Kleinwalsertal trip for several days (big photo).



Figure 18: 2017 – Quiz evening (upper left). 2018 – Creative Drawing & BBQ (upper right). 2019 – Walk with Llama & Alpacas (middle). 2018 – Winter time (bottom left). 2018 – Carnival (bottom right).

9.2 Where are our Buddies from?

Since our program was first established in 2012 we had lots of Buddies joining our program in the last years... But where did our Buddies come from? Take a look at our map!

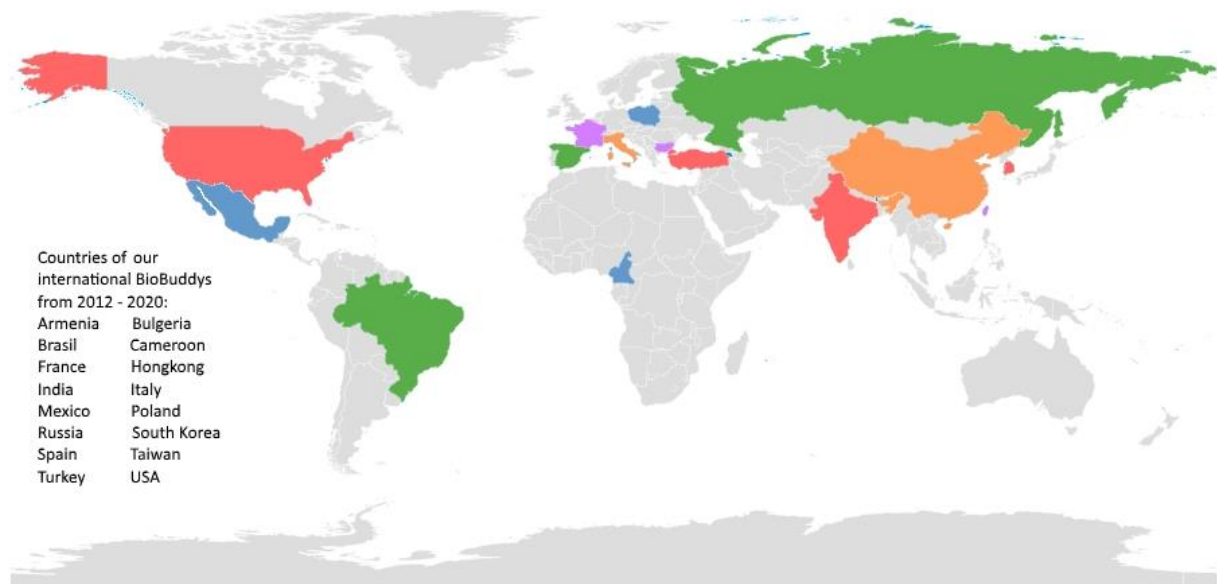


Figure 19: BioBuddies-Map. Colored countries = countries of our international BioBuddies from 2012-2020.

9.3 Experiences

This is a collection from our previous Buddies, how they felt about their stay here in Darmstadt. Their expectations, fears and happy moments. We would be very pleased, if your experiences with the program would be listed here soon!

“Joining the family of BioBuddies is definitely a highlight of my time in TUDarmstadt. I cannot imagine what if my BioBuddy was not there to help me getting into the life in my exchange program – from how to enrol courses to how to party like a German. Until now, years after I finished the exchange program, I do remember times in Hobbits, Ice-cream gatherings, the Movie Night, and more super moments. “Do not hesitate to join gatherings with BioBuddies” – this is an advice for every newcomer of BioBuddies program. Events held by BioBuddies brought me unforgettable memories in this university. Those are good chances for you to know more friends and make your life in TUDarmstadt more fruitful!”

Henry, Hong Kong (BioBuddies 2017)

“I was so stressfull before I came [to] Germany because I didnt know people live in there, any way, any dormitory and your language. This program (I mean BioBuddies helping) showed me many way about city, my department and the most importan thing is so warm people. ❤️ My most interesting time was my first day because my home wasnt ready yet and I stayed(and slept) my BioBuddy's home. She was the most helpfull and sweet BioBuddy. But I have to say actually all of BioBuddies so helpfull and crazy 😊 They showed us how can we improve our language, and how can we do our other thing about the city. My other unforgetting experience was Noel day [christmas] we made cookies and ate deliciously 😊”

Nurşin, Turkey (BioBuddies 2017)

“I had really good time with my Biobuddies. I remember the time I spent in your [Caro ´s] house making a group t-shirt for ourselves. Besides, several simple tips related not only to campus life but also to daily life were really helpful. I would like to highly recommend this program for other students who would come to TU Darmstadt as an exchange student.”

Chowoo, South Korea (BioBuddies 2018)

“The Biobuddy program really boosted my experience as an exchange student in Darmstadt. Having an easy way to know and bond with the buddies helped me through many hard times when I needed help to adapt to the new environment and also made my best times even better. One of my favorite moments from the program was the trip to Austria, if it was just us exchange students, we would have never been able to organize such an entertaining trip. The buddies also invited us to a lot of their personal activities which helped us bond so much and make myself feel even more grateful for the opportunity to go on this exchange program.”

Brian, Hong Kong (BioBuddies 2019)



“The best thing I liked about the Biobuddies program was that they organized everything in advance and informed me about any important thing, so I knew what to do. They were always nearby to help if I could meet any difficulties. And a special thank you to my Biobuddy - Sofija, who was always there to help me out!”

Alexey, Russia (BioBuddies 2019)