

## International and Visiting Doctoral Candidates at Technische Universität Berlin

A guide for academic chairs

TU Berlin Center for Junior Scholars (CJS)

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## Contents

Foreword.....	3
Preparing for doctoral studies .....	4
Financing .....	4
Letter of invitation .....	5
Hosting Agreement.....	5
Visa questions .....	5
Health insurance .....	6
Supervision agreement .....	7
Enrolling as a doctoral student .....	7
Enrolling – a step-by-step guide .....	7
Enrollment as a prerequisite for student housing .....	8
Deadlines, re-registering, and paying semester fees .....	9
Arrival in Berlin .....	9
Academic activities .....	10
Continuing education and language courses .....	10
International Career Day/Week .....	10
Round Table for Junior Scholars .....	11
proMotion Program for female doctoral researchers.....	11
Publishing during doctoral studies .....	11
Stipends, competitions, and awards.....	11
Asking for help early on - mental health and other counseling services.....	11
Completing a doctorate and the alumni program.....	12
Individual support from CJS.....	12

Dear colleagues in our academic chairs,

This guide is designed to help you support your international doctoral candidates.

The [Center for Junior Scholars \(CJS\)](#) was established in 2020 as a central institute at Technische Universität Berlin (TU Berlin). It integrates the [ProFiL Program](#) for female postdocs and the former TU-DOC – Office for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Services and offers years of expertise assisting and working with international doctoral candidates. Our team's central aim is to support the advancement of junior scholars.

The CJS offers comprehensive networking opportunities and services and proactively supports the further development and cultivation of a university culture that is dedicated to the advancement of junior scholars at TU Berlin and reflects current quality standards and strategic developments. Our services for doctoral candidates and postdocs include advising on administrative and organizational questions, preparation of project proposals, as well as support in case of problems or conflicts between candidates and supervisors. We also provide information about calls for scholarships and awards, continuing education and professional development courses, as well as funding for travel and mobility.

This guide combines the most common topics which arise when hosting junior scholars and offers a rough overview of the topics we regularly encounter in our own advising work. It is not conclusive nor is it tailored to individual cases. If you feel there any topics not included in this guide, please contact us with your suggestions.

The guide is helpful for doctoral candidates who are starting their doctorate at TU Berlin and will acquire their degree here as well as visiting candidates conducting a short research stay at your academic chair. In addition to this guide for the academic chairs, we have also published a [guide for international doctoral candidates on our website](#). You are invited to share this with others.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have. Our contact details are provided below. We hope this guide helps you to support new doctoral candidates with their arrival at TU Berlin. Thank you for your commitment.

Sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Annette Mayer - Director of the Center for Junior Scholars

### Preparing for doctoral studies

Some international doctoral candidates may already be familiar with the German university system, speak German, and be able to navigate through TU Berlin's website by themselves. Others may lack a general understanding of this unfamiliar territory. Regardless of their background, every doctoral candidate requires support and advising tailored to their situation and needs.

### Financing

While some doctoral candidates finance their studies or living expenses through a [work contract](#) at TU Berlin or a research institution, others are funded by a [scholarship or grant](#), most frequently through the DAAD. Generally, scholarships are tax-exempt in Germany. However, it is possible that recipients may need to pay taxes in their home country on a scholarship provided by an international funding organization. International doctoral candidates are recommended to request a certificate confirming they have paid tax on the scholarship.

Scholarship amounts can vary greatly. There are very few to no options to fund professional development and continuing education, conferences, and other formats of academic exchange and development beyond basic payments. If possible, please provide doctoral candidates with financing for additional necessary costs. If this is not an option, there are several [supplemental scholarships](#) candidates can apply for. The CJS also provides limited [funds for conference travel](#) if all other options have been exhausted without success.

Some doctoral candidates fund their research at TU Berlin themselves. In our experience, candidates' own financial resources are used up quite quickly. Self-funding can also lead to candidates no longer being eligible for certain scholarships due to timing (those who have already been in Germany for a few months or who are in a higher degree semester are ineligible for certain funding). When professors take on new doctoral candidates, we strongly recommend that a realistic schedule and financing plan are also created.

Financial hardship particularly arises near the end of doctoral studies due to the end of a work contract, scholarship, etc. If international candidates realistically expect to complete their doctorate within six months, they can apply for the [STIBET degree completion grant](#). The CJS publishes calls for this grant annually or bi-annually when sufficient funds are available. A completion grant for female doctoral candidates is also offered by the women's representatives at the beginning of each semester ([PAS](#)). The [Elsa Neumann Scholarship \(NaFÖG\)](#) is another option for doctoral candidates nearing the end of their work. The doctoral project must be expected to make an important contribution to research in the respective subject area. Funding is limited for one year until completion of the thesis.

### Letter of invitation

Many doctoral candidates require a letter of invitation from their academic chair to apply for a visa or enter Germany. A template for this is not provided as the information for each academic chair varies greatly. However, the letter must include the following:

- Subject: Bitte um Erteilung eines nationalen Visums/Request for issue of a national visa
- Guest name and date of birth
- Purpose of stay at TU Berlin
- Duration of the stay
- Name of the faculty/institute/academic chair and supervisor
- How the stay will be financed (scholarship, work contract, self-financed)

Please note that some consulates and embassies require certificates of German or English language level from doctoral candidates. However, this requirement may be waived if you state in your letter that you have reviewed the candidate's language skills and determined these to be sufficient. You can also refer to the doctoral regulations, which permit English as the language of the dissertation and scientific defense in addition to German. Please identify, e.g. through conversation, whether a candidate's language skills are actually sufficient for excellent research work and/or refer them to TU Berlin's language offers.

### Hosting Agreement

To obtain an entry visa or a residence permit from the relevant authority **for the purpose of research** ([Section 18d of the Residence Act – Aufenthaltsgesetz – AufenthG](#)), **international researchers from non-EU member states** require a **hosting agreement** with the **host research institution**. To support the University's academic chairs and research groups, staff in the University's International Scientific Cooperation section (INT WS) will co-sign all hosting agreements for **mobile researchers who do not have an employment contract with TU Berlin**. However, we kindly ask the supervising professor to sign the hosting agreement first, as staff in INT WS are not able to assess the suitability of the candidate in terms of their research profile. The completed and signed [hosting agreement](#) for international mobile researchers **without a work contract with TU Berlin** must be returned to [INT WS](#) for final signing.

[Human Resources](#) at TU Berlin is responsible for signing hosting agreements for visiting mobile researchers **with an employment contract with TU Berlin**.

For reasons of export control, please also ensure that you include [Marcel Richter](#) from the Research Department in cc for hosting agreements.

Please visit the [website of the international office](#) to obtain further information.

### Visa questions

Every visa application is unique. Unfortunately, TU Berlin does not have a central office to assist doctoral candidates with visa applications. We recommend that you check the website of the International Office at the [Welcome Center](#) for general information.

The embassies and consulates in their home countries are the best source of information. A small general overview of residence regulations (PDF) is available on the [HRK](#) website. It is of

course helpful if someone from the host institution (administrative assistant, future colleagues, etc.) can put themselves in the candidate's position and guide them when contacting German authorities. The Deutsche Gesellschaft internationaler Studierender (DeGis) provides information about how to open a blocked account ("[Sperrkonto](#)"), which is frequently needed to apply for a visa.

### Health insurance

International doctoral candidates must have health insurance for the entire duration of their stay in Germany. If a doctoral candidate has private insurance or is insured abroad so that they are not required to be insured in Germany, they must submit proof of this in tuPORT to enroll. TU Berlin provides further details on [its website](#).

### Supervision agreement

We recommend that doctoral candidates conclude a supervision agreement with their supervisor (template in [German](#) / [English](#)). This is also required by the [doctoral regulations](#) (Section 4 (1)) and the [Berlin Higher Education Act](#) (Section 35 (4)). The agreement allows both parties to communicate their expectations and thus prevent conflict and misunderstanding. This can be particularly useful as the university system and customs may differ between Germany and a candidate's home country. A supervision agreement is also recommended for research and teaching assistants who intend to complete a doctorate. This is especially useful to more clearly differentiate between contractually required work and the candidate's own work.

### Enrolling as a doctoral student

Doctoral candidates frequently ask us whether it is possible to enroll as a doctoral student at TU Berlin. Doctoral candidates employed at TU Berlin are permitted to enroll. Indeed, many do. All others, whether scholarship holders, external doctoral candidates (work contract with research institution etc.), self-financed candidates, or visiting doctoral candidates must enroll at TU Berlin pursuant to Section 4 (4) Doctoral Regulations if they wish to acquire their degree here. In order to enroll, they must have first submitted their declaration of intent to the faculty.

Visiting doctoral candidates who do not intend to earn their degree at TU Berlin and generally only stay here for up to two semesters do not need to have submitted the declaration of intent to their faculty service center. In such cases, the letter of invitation is sufficient. They should consider whether it makes sense to enroll. It is often not worth it if they are only staying for a few weeks.

### Enrolling – a step-by-step guide

Below we describe the steps to enroll. You are welcome to share this with doctoral candidates.

1. Doctoral researchers first need to [register online with TU Berlin](#) to receive access to the TU portal (tuPORT). Campus Management will send the login data within 2-3 days after registration has been completed and submitted. If a doctoral candidate does not receive the login information, they should contact us so that we can identify the issue. Users should always use Firefox or Internet Explorer when signing in or using tuPORT. Depending on when they arrive, they will also need to select which semester they want to enroll in: summer semester (April-September) or winter semester (October-March). They can enroll at any time throughout the semester.
2. Once a doctoral candidate has logged in, they can begin the enrollment process by uploading the required documents. [Here](#) you can find video tutorials demonstrating how to use tuPORT and upload documents. Candidates should try to have all the necessary documents at hand before starting the process, so they can upload them right away. This will give them time to react in case the admissions office rejects certain documents. They will also need to pay the [semester fee](#) in this step. Doctoral candidates can request exemption from the Semesterticket for public transportation. This reduces the semester fees by roughly EUR 200 per semester.

3. Doctoral candidates must now wait for confirmation and regularly check their status. Once they have been admitted, they can download their certificate of enrollment, activate their account, and request their student ID. No further steps are required until they re-register the following semester.
4. Only for visiting doctoral candidates: If they want to enroll, they must follow the exact same steps above, but unlike regular doctoral candidates, they will not receive a generated email with the login data for tuPORT. In order to obtain these, they have to contact us with their applicant number and we will put them in contact with the enrollment office.

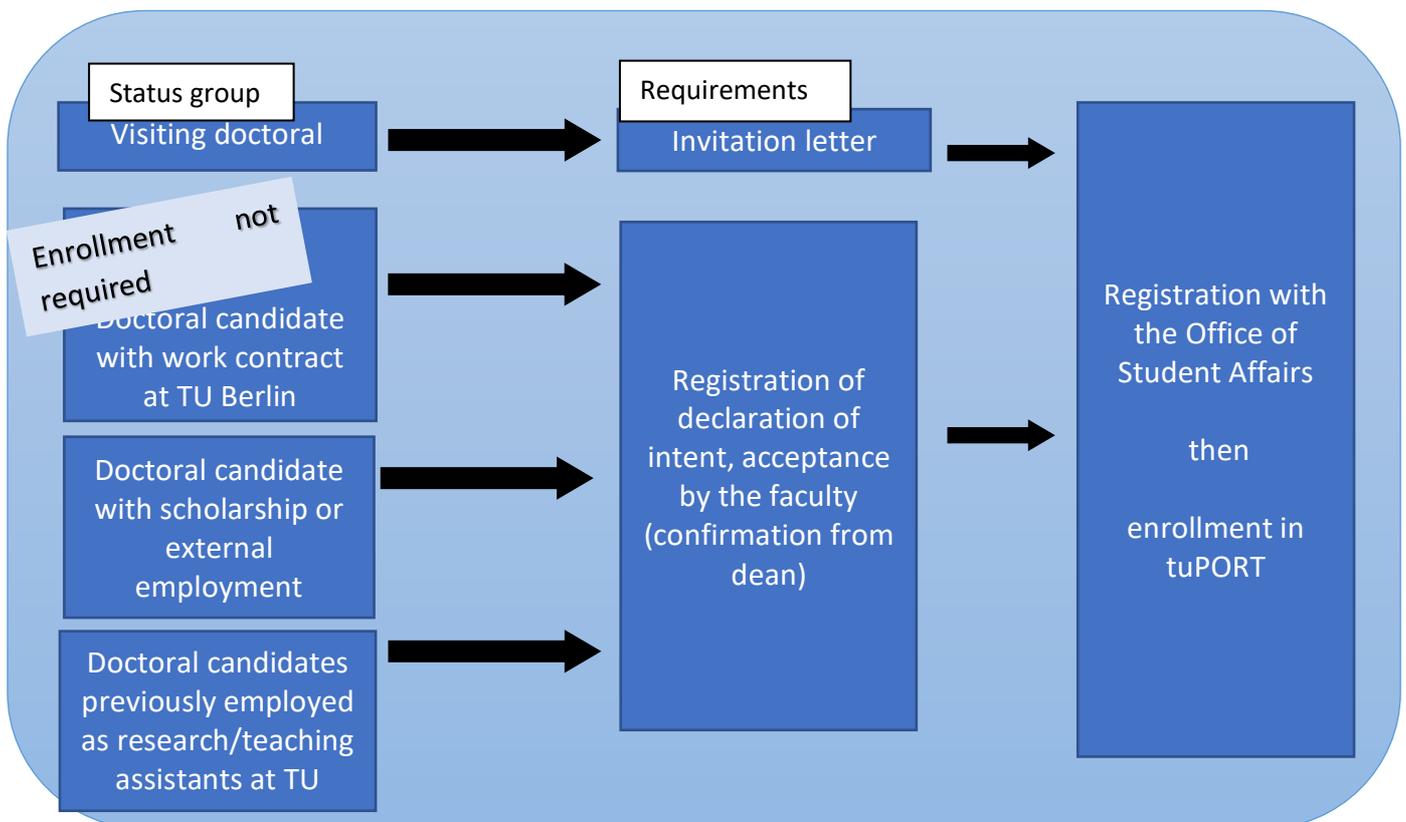


Image: Enrollment required? What is needed to enroll?

### Enrollment as a prerequisite for student housing

Enrollment can be completed remotely and there are several reasons why it may be beneficial to enroll before arriving at TU Berlin. One reason is if doctoral candidates wish to apply for a room in one of Studierendenwerk's dormitories. Rooms are only offered to enrolled students and the waiting period for a room near the city center can be several semesters. It may also be better to first apply for a room in a dormitory further away and later switch to a dorm closer to the city center.

### Deadlines, re-registering, and paying semester fees

There is no deadline when enrolling for the first time. Candidates can enroll at any time, independent of the semester start dates. However, they must adhere to the deadlines for re-registration. Doctoral students must decide each semester whether they want to request exemption from the Semesterticket. A request for exemption must be submitted through tuPORT each semester.

The semester fees with and without the Semesterticket are listed on the [Office of Student Affairs website](#). Semester fees cannot be paid until an account has been activated for the first time (immediately after enrolling for the first time). Payments must include the individual reference (payment overview in tuPORT).

Advantages of enrolling for doctoral candidates include

- Reduced rates in the canteen
- 2025: Deutschland-Semesterticket for public transportation
- Special offers for students (student housing, job fairs, etc.)
- Student discounts in movie theaters, museums, etc.

### Arrival in Berlin

The [Berlin Welcome Center](#) provides helpful regularly updated tips about a wide range of topics such as the requirement to register your residence, opening an account, broadcasting fee, etc. The information is also available in a number of languages.

The [Welcome Guide for International Researchers](#) published by the Department of International Affairs also provides answers to a number of organizational questions, such as how to get a registration appointment or find an apartment.

If possible, we recommend providing each new international doctoral candidate with a "buddy" who is familiar with the academic chair and can introduce them to the team and help them integrate more easily. The doctoral candidate and buddy can share contact information before arrival so that internal team questions can be quickly resolved.

Make a note of the new doctoral candidate's start date at the academic chair and make sure their workspace and any technical equipment (computer, keys, etc.) are ready. If necessary, inform the candidate which equipment will not be available or provided.

It is not immediately clear to many international doctoral candidates which areas of research and other tasks their team members are responsible for. We recommend introducing the candidate to their colleagues and explaining each of their roles.

The CJS regularly offers **onboarding events** for international (visiting) doctoral candidates to introduce them to the German science system. These events explain the difference between the various doctoral programs and academic career options in Germany. Contact the CJS to find out the next dates. You can also request such an event. Once doctoral candidates have been admitted to the faculty, they should be added to a mailing list to receive automatic emails about the faculty's offers regarding doctoral studies. In particular, candidates should attend the annual **orientation events on the faculty level**.

### Academic activities

In addition to administrative support, TU Berlin offers a number of academic activities open to doctoral candidates. These include a wide range of course offerings, networking opportunities, the opportunity to contribute to shaping the University at structural level, and programs designed specifically for women.

### Continuing education and language courses

Doctoral candidates can take part in [TU Berlin continuing education offers](#) and Berlin University Alliance ([BUA](#)) offers at any time. Most courses are offered free of charge.

Courses at TU Berlin are offered by the Central Institute for Scientific Continuing Education and Cooperation ([ZEWK](#)), Human Resources and Continuing Education ([PE-WB](#)), the Berliner Zentrum für Hochschullehre ([BZHL](#)), among others.

It is also possible to take a language course at the Modern Language Center ([ZEMS](#)) (e.g. German as a foreign language or English). This can help candidates successfully integrate and succeed in their doctoral studies. Once a year, usually in fall, ZEMS and CJS organize a intensive German language course for doctoral researchers of TUB. Contact us if you need further information: [info@cjs.tu-berlin.de](mailto:info@cjs.tu-berlin.de)

Doctoral students can also register for the very popular [Kick-Off Your Doctorate](#) event via the BUA's [Graduate Studies Support Program](#) and thus receive comprehensive information and preparation right at the start of their doctorate.

### International Career Day/Week

Once a year the CJS cooperates with the TU Berlin [Alumni Office](#) to host an [International Career Week](#). This event particularly allows international (visiting) doctoral candidates to learn about applying for jobs, working, and visas in Germany after completing their doctorate as well as speak with international alumni.

### Round Table for Junior Scholars

Round tables dedicated to issues doctoral candidates face are regularly organized by the CJS. Encourage your doctoral candidates to participate in these round tables and help contribute to shaping research at TU Berlin and identifying structural problems. We also regularly publish new dates on [our website](#) together with a registration form.

### proMotion Program for female doctoral researchers

The [proMotion Program](#) supports female doctoral candidates at TU Berlin and offers a qualification program and individual coaching as well as opportunities to speak with other female doctoral candidates. proMotion consists of two components:

1. the qualification program proMotion training and
2. the accompanying framework program proMotion support

proMotion support offers informative lunch talks on career topics, which also provide an opportunity to network; individual coaching; and collegial support during a doctorate.

### Publishing during doctoral studies

In order to finance the publication of papers in Open Access journals or monographs and collected volumes, candidates can make use of TU Berlin's [Open Access Publication Fund](#). This fund can also be used for publication fees which can be reduced further through special agreements with publishers and memberships.

### Stipends, competitions, and awards

The Research Promotion Section has a list of several third-party funding organizations on its [website](#) which can provide stipends for printing, conference travel, or material resources.

Doctoral candidates can also find a list of awards and competitions for dissertations/research on [our website](#).

### Asking for help early on - mental health and other counseling services

Doctoral studies can be one of the most stressful periods in a researcher's life. It is important for candidates to ask for help early on if problems arise which their supervisor cannot help them with. Assist your doctoral candidates with searching for resources such as TU Berlin or Studierendennetzwerk's [psychological counseling](#).

Different offices at TU Berlin provide support for a variety of circumstances and issues. For instance the [Family Services Office](#) assists with combining research with family responsibilities, the [Career Service](#) with exploring different career options, and the [Centre for Entrepreneurship](#) with starting a company, etc.

You are welcome to contact the [CJS team](#) for assistance finding the right point of contact for your doctoral candidates.

The CJS also provides confidential [conflict counseling](#) if problems arise between a doctoral candidate and their supervisor. The ombudsperson for doctoral candidates in each faculty also provides confidential advising. If candidates have questions about formal issues, the [Faculty Service Center](#) can advise and assist.

### Completing a doctorate and the alumni program

Doctoral candidates often have many questions when completing their doctorate. The [faculty service centers](#) can help with planning the doctoral procedure. We strongly recommend doctoral candidates ask for help before submitting their dissertation.

Doctoral candidates frequently have many questions about publishing their dissertation. The University Library's [Dissertation Service](#) has helpful tips about this.

A difficult issue many candidates face when completing their doctorate is what to do next. We recommend contacting the [Career Service](#) which can review application portfolios, provide application training, etc.

By registering with the TU Berlin [alumni program](#), it is possible to network with other graduates and learn about possible career paths.

[Other benefits](#) of an alumni membership include:

- Events
- Online seminars
- Alumni email
- Free library card
- Reduced rate for TU Sport offers
- Alumni entrepreneurs
- Alumni Kinder-Campus
- Language and culture courses
- Media

### Individual support from CJS

Last but not least, we recommend referring your new doctoral candidates to the CJS as early as possible so that they can receive the support they need. Our colleague Sophie Müller-Moewes can work with you to assist researchers with their first steps at TU Berlin. You can also contact her to learn about planned orientation events or request an individual date for your faculty or international doctoral candidates. If useful, you are invited to use the following template to welcome international doctoral candidates and inform them about our office and services. This helps us to collect information about the challenges and topics international doctoral candidates at TU Berlin face.

Email draft:

Dear international doctoral candidate / applicant for a doctorate at TU Berlin,

The Center for Junior Scholars (CJS for short) offers a complementary service especially for doctoral candidates from abroad.

While for administrative and formal matters your Faculty Service Center might be the first point of contact, the CJS team supports you with getting established at TU Berlin or dealing with challenges that come up anywhere during successful completion of your doctoral degree. Contact with you allows them to improve structures and processes at our university to better fit the needs of international applicants and researchers. Even if you do not have a detailed question or issue at the moment, just contact them at [info@cjs.tu-berlin.de](mailto:info@cjs.tu-berlin.de), so that they can send you their latest newsletter, invitations to events etc.

Thank you and best regards,

**Publishing information:**

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