

# FAQ ONLINE WELCOME WEEK SUMMER TERM 2020 TALK SHOW: HOW TO SURVIVE IN GERMANY & MINI INTERCULTURAL TRAINING

Link to Facebook Group "RWTH Welcomes Internationals:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/708655583228602/learning\\_content/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/708655583228602/learning_content/)

Link to the presentation Intercultural Training:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDqM3Kmpeko>

Link to the presentation "5 Step to survive RWTH" (Aya):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd5SLtlxyh4>

Link to the presentation "Social Life" (Orgil):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0443RM2cQ>

Link to the presentation "My German Experience" (Haiyan):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6KwBPjOpo8>

Link to the presentation "Cultural Shock" (Alba):

<https://gigamove.rz.rwth-aachen.de/d/id/LYmGqa9DdEWSsJ> (Password: TalkShowAlba)

Link to recorded Zoom Meeting "Talk Show":

<https://gigamove.rz.rwth-aachen.de/d/id/n4t6bT5UdTskPm> (Password: TalkShow2020)

FAQ OF INFO SERVICE CENTER:

<https://www.rwth-aachen.de/cms/root/Studium/Im-Studium/Internationales/~inno/FAQ/?lidx=1>

TOPICS MENTIONED IN THE INFO SERVICE CENTER FAQ WEBSITE:

- Transport in Aachen ? Options, applications...
- GEZ / radio fee
- Health insurance
- Opening a bank account

... AND MUCH MUCH MORE!

QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED IN THE TALKSHOW:

## HOUSING

- How can I get accommodation in a student dorm? How long are the waiting lists?

You will find the link to the application portal of the Studierendenwerk as well as a list of all other private dorms and housing projects in and around Aachen in our Housing Brochure which is available at [www.rwth-aachen.de/housing](http://www.rwth-aachen.de/housing). It takes at least six months up to one year to get a room offer at the Studierendenwerk student dorms.

Should you need support in searching for accommodation, please contact our Housing Advice Service at [housing@rwth-aachen.de](mailto:housing@rwth-aachen.de) and send them the contact form you will find on our website. We are happy to help!

- If I contact the Housing Advice Service ([housing@rwth-aachen.de](mailto:housing@rwth-aachen.de)), how long will it take to get a reply?

At the moment we need at least three working days to process our inquiries due to a larger demand than usual.

- When do I need to do my city registration?

You need to register your address in Aachen within two weeks after the start of your lease contract.

- TIPS FROM OUR STUDENT ASSISTANTS IN FINDING AN APARTMENT IN AACHEN:

Alba found hers at Ebay Kleinanzeigen (Platform for selling second-hand things).

Haiyan found his apartment on WG-Gesucht (most popular platform for student apartments)

Dominika Dudzik advises to ask your Buddy to help you find accommodation. He/she can guide you with that or accompany you to visit the apartment or help you contact landlords.

When applying for a room or an apartment (regardless if dorm or private market), do not only write "hi, I want your apartment". Write as much people as possible but really introduce yourself and try to adapt your housing application to the offer you are applying for (especially in case of shared flat). Do not expect to receive a reply from all landlords or shared flats as they usually receive hundreds of requests

## EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- What is the BeBuddy Program? What are the benefits? How to register? What does my Buddy do? Is there a registration deadline?

The BeBuddy Program is a mentoring program which matches German and local students with new international students to support them at the beginning of their stay. The benefits are numerous: finding a local or German friend to guide you and help your settle down in Aachen, support in discovering the Campus, with the course registration, house hunting, social contacts...

The Buddies and Mentees are usually matched based on the course of studies but also on the personal interests. It can happen that your Buddy is enrolled in an higher or lower academic level as you are. That is not a problem at all, you can still become great friends!

The Buddies are volunteers, therefore they are offering their help without earning money. The registration to the BeBuddy program is free of charge. Register here to BeBuddy Program: <https://www.rwth-aachen.de/go/id/bqxb/lidx/1>

There is no registration deadline. Best is before you arrive in Aachen but you can also register shortly after having arrived in Aachen. In the winter semester, there is a huge amount of Mentees to match and therefore an earlier registration is recommended.

If you have already settled down in Aachen, we rather recommend getting in touch with the student clubs rather than registering for the BeBuddy Program BUT you can become a Buddy yourself and help another international student in your second or third semester!

- How can we volunteer for the international student clubs? Where can we find the information about the events and meetings organized by those?

If you would like to be part of an international student club, just go one of their information meetings (usually weekly team meetings) and share your interest in participating in the club.

The Humboldt-Haus is a great place to meet international student associations. Since the Humboldt Haus is currently closed, some associations also offer online info events. You can find the list of international student associations at: [https://www.rwth-aachen.de/global/show\\_document.asp?id=aaaaaaaaagbsjoe](https://www.rwth-aachen.de/global/show_document.asp?id=aaaaaaaaagbsjoe)

## EVERYDAY LIFE

- How important is it to learn German in order to survive in Germany? Do you have any tips to learn German easier or faster? Are there any fees at the Language Center taking an A1 German course?

For everyday life and in order to integrate quickly, learning German (at least basic skills) is highly recommended. Sport activities at the University Sports Center are helpful to make new contacts and therefore improve your German skills at the same time. Getting in touch with your Fachschaft (Faculty Student Council) can also be very helpful or maybe getting involved in a local student association!

The German courses at the Language Center are not free of charge. The fee does not depend on the level but on the amount of contact hours during the week (four or eight). You will find the prices and information about the registration and placement tests at [www.sz.rwth-aachen.de](http://www.sz.rwth-aachen.de). Please note that a placement test is necessary to apply for a spot in a course and that you need to register for this test beforehand. To take the test and then register for a class, you will need your TIM-ID.

- Does the Language Center offer IELTS or TOEFL tests?

Check out the IELTS Website to find out where their tests take place. The RWTH Language Center offers DSH Exams for German but no official English test such as Cambridge, TOEFL or IELTS.

- What places would you recommend to visit in Aachen?

Check out Orgil's and Haiyan's videos for very good tips for things to see and to do in and around Aachen!

- Is there a dress code at the University?

No, there is no dress code at RWTH Aachen University but of course you should dress appropriately (e.g. Pullover, Jean). Basically, just dress as if you were meeting friend at any public place. "Casual" is the word.

- How dangerous is Aachen?

Aachen is considered to be pretty safe. Robbery can happen of course, like anywhere in the world but with common sense and basic safety gestures you can protect yourself from most dangerous situations.

- Can I get a driving licence in Germany as international student? How should I proceed if I would like to do so?

Yes, it is possible to do your driving licence in Germany. You need to visit a drivers school (Fahrschule) and get more information there on what you need to do or what documents to provide, if you already have a driving licence in your home country.

If you do not have any yet, you can register for driving lessons, there is a minimum amount of theory lessons and practical lessons before you can pass the drivers exam.

- Which are the most friendly service-providers (phone, bank, etc.) for non-EU students?

As state institution, we unfortunately cannot give you any recommendations when it comes to choosing a specific phone provider, bank or similar.

If you are trying to get a phone card, you should know that you will need to provide proof of identification, such as your ID or passport to have it activated. You do not need the address registration for that.

European students can use the sim-card of their home country since there is no longer roaming in Europe.

- How much time does it take to travel from Kerkrade to RWTH? Is it better to travel by bike, train or bus?

The way from Kerkrade (Netherlands) to Aachen takes around 45min to one hour by bus and/or train. With a bike, it takes about 45min depending on your speed.

- I will be living in Netherlands. Should I buy a Dutch or a German sim-card?

We would recommend getting a German sim-card as you will spend most of your time in Aachen and will be in contact with German numbers mostly. Since there is no roaming in Europe, you will not need to pay extra for using Internet from "abroad".

- Where can I buy a bike in Aachen? How are the bike traffic rules in Germany?

There are lots of bike shops in Aachen, which sell new bikes and are therefore expensive. You can buy second-hand bikes in Aachen at several occasions. There are street markets for second-hand bikes organized by the City of Aachen once a month but also the Student Union AStA organizes one once during winter semester. Some student dorms sometimes also organize bike markets once or twice a year. Just ask your student dorm in case you are interested. Experience with bikes is recommended in case you buy a second-hand bike to make sure it is safe to ride with. You can also rent a bike at the City of Aachen (orange bike) or at private companies in Aachen (e.g. Swapfiets) as they have student friendly prices.

Aachen's street regulations are not the best when it comes to riding a bike but the City is working on making the street more "cyclist-friendly". Very important: in Germany we drive on the right side of the road - also with the bike.

- What are the cheapest means of transportation to neighbour countries or for long distance trips?

In Europe, there is a good offer of long distance bus connections, which is the cheapest kind of public transportation when it comes to long distance trips. Blablacar is also a good option for very low priced car sharing and getting to know new people!

Some student associations offer daytrips including transport and program at the destination for students for very low prices. You should check out their offer on Facebook to find out more. You will also find trip advices for discovering the region you're your Semesterticket at our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/IO.ISC/>.

Traveling within North Rhine Westphalia or up to Maastricht in the Netherlands will always be the cheapest way for you as the student since you can travel with any regional train with your Semesterticket for free. Your Semesterticket is valid for the region of Limburg in the Netherlands, including Heerlen, Kerkrade, Valkenburg and Maastricht. It is not valid for Belgium.

For traveling within Belgium, you can buy cheap 10 tickets for the train at the main train station.

- Is it difficult to park a car in the city of Aachen?

Depending on what kind of car you have, where you live and what parking authorization you have, it can be a bit difficult to park your car in Aachen.

As student, you can get a parking licence for the University for a specific parking zone at RWTH: <https://www.rwth-aachen.de/cms/root/Die-RWTH/Mobilitaet/~jgyj/Parkraumbewirtschaftung/?lidx=1>

- Where can I find healthy and cheap food in Aachen if I am on a budget?

Food in Germany is in general mostly inexpensive, if you buy it at the supermarket, especially the discount supermarkets. When shopping at the supermarket, prefer buying from “Eigenmarke” – which means from the brand of the supermarket, e.g. Ja! for REWE, Balea at DM, Gut&Güntig at EDEKA and so on...

The University canteens (Mensa) have really cheap offers - such as salad bar or vegetarian menus...

Consider installing the application Toogoodtogo, which sells cheap food vouchers for bakeries, restaurants and similar. The idea is to buy surprise meals or bags of food which would otherwise be thrown away by the end of the day. This way you are saving food from being wasted and get a large amount for a smaller price.

If you do not have any electrical devices to cook yet, you can buy inexpensive ones online (stove, microwave and so on) or also check INCAS Facebook Group as students usually sell furniture and devices via this group: <https://www.facebook.com/INCASAachen/>

## BEING A STUDENT AT RWTH

- How long does classes usually last? Are there any on the weekend? During the weekend, are there any study-related activities?

Classes usually start at 8.30am, then it depends on your own schedule. Your day at the University could last until the evening (8pm). Usually, lectures last about two hours. Since you will be creating your schedule yourself, you will notice quite early that you will have days where you will not have any courses – or close to none – and some will be fully packed. When creating your schedule, try to find a balance so that your courses load stays realistic for you.

On the weekend you will not have any classes. However, you usually have a lot of work to do at home. For example, Haiyan's weekends consist of one day of studying, one day of relaxing.

- Where can I find more information about the different types of classes (seminars, lectures, preliminary tutorial and self-calculation tutorial)?

If you watch Aya's video, you can find out more about three of these types of classes. We also recommend having a good look at the PDF “introduction to RWTHonline” which we have sent you the past two days attached in the invitations. Not only the RWTHonline symbols are explained but you can also find out where to find the information about the different classes.

- Do we need to physically attend all classes?

You do not need to be physically present at all classes, since attendance is mostly not compulsory. However for some courses (Laboratories, Seminars...), attendance is required and controlled. When you register for a subject, you will find the information about whether the attendance is compulsory or not on the RWTH Moodle page of the course.

Check out Aya's video for more tips on finding out for yourself which classes you should attend or not.

- Is there a minimum or maximum amount of credits per semester? How many credits would you recommend to reach per semester to have a decent GPA and social life? Is there a minimum number of courses we have to register for in a semester?

There is no minimum or maximum amount of credits fixed per semester and also no minimum number of courses you have to take within a semester. The recommended amount of credits per semester is 30 CP. Note for non-European students: Your residence permit depends on your studies. If you do not register for classes at all and do not take any exams, it can have a negative impact on the extension of your residence permit, therefore be careful with that.

- Can I register for courses which are not part of my curriculum?

In theory, you can do any courses you would like in any course of studies but for your degree, you need to complete the course requirements planned in study plan. Also, some curricula require that you take courses for a specific amount of credits in another course of studies or for example in a non-technical class (e.g. language course).

- How do we know which subjects we need to take for a specific semester? Is there any guideline?

You can find the plan for your course of studies in RWTHonline. There you will find the links to the regulations of your course of studies with a course overview and a plan for your studies with the compulsory classes for each semester. This plan shows which courses or which subject areas you need to complete.

You should really contact your Faculty Student Council (Fachschaft) for advice. There is one for each faculty (sometimes even several within a faculty) and their members have many insiders tips (such as past papers) and can help you with creating your timetable or finding out which courses you need to take.

- In case two courses take place on the same day at the same time, how to deal with course overlap?

The faculties try to avoid any collisions when planning the classes. Therefore during your first semester you should not have any problems with course overlap. Later on during your studies, you will have to find priorities in your subjects: which one you want to or need to attend?

- When does the semester usually finish? When do the holidays start?

At RWTH you do not really have so called "holidays". The semester goes from 1 October or April to 31 March or 30 September. The lectures stop at the end of January and July but then the exam phase starts until the end of the semester. Depending on how many exams you have registered for and what kind of exams you will be taking, you might have more or less free time during the "lecture-free period" (vorlesungsfreie Zeit).

- Do we have only three attempts regardless of the subject? If we fail them, what next?

If you do not appear at an exam without having cancelled your registration to it, it will count as failed (one of your three attempts will then be lost). Yes, all students at RWTH have three attempts per exam. The best grade is 1,0, 4,0 is passed and 5 or 6 are failed. If you failed all three attempts, you have one last chance in an oral exam. In case you fail the oral exam too,

you will have further options, such as switching your course of studies but you need to get in touch with the Immigration Office before switching.  
Check out the attendance and participations rules of your exams to know what to expect.

## WORKING AS A STUDENT

- What are the requirements to get a part-time job? What are common part-time jobs for students? How do we get a HiWi job (student assistant)? Can I become a part-time student research assistant?

If you are a non-EU student: First check the requirements of your residence permit to find out how many days or half-days you are allowed to work in a year (usually 240 half-days or 120 days). Check out the FAQ "Getting and extending your residence permit" for further information about this. Please note that your studies have to remain your main focus! Your studies are the absolute priority, not working. Therefore, make sure to have a job with does not impair your studies. Student jobs within the RWTH are mostly the most appropriate to combine with your studies. Working as student assistant is usually only possible from your second semester.

If you want to work as student assistant, you should check out RWTH job website: [www.rwth-aachen.de/jobboerse](http://www.rwth-aachen.de/jobboerse) and apply for jobs you find interesting. if you have wrote a good grade in a subject, the lecturer might even contact you to offer you a job position. There is no minimum or maximum amount of available spots. It depends on each position opening and of course the outcome depends on you and on your application.

Outside the University it is up to you to find out where you would like to work and to apply. For example if you want to work as a waiter (one of the common student jobs in Germany).

You should also check the Career Center's offer as they provide support in job applications and have a special service for international students: <https://www.rwth-aachen.de/cms/root/Studium/Nach-dem-Studium/~ejx/Karriere/?lidx=1>

- Is it realistic to combine studies, a part-time job and extracurricular courses or activities?

This is a very subjective question: the answer depends on each person. Some manage to do that very well, other will have more difficulties working beside their studies so it really depends on you as a person.

Aya's experience: At the beginning it was quite hard and therefore I backed off a bit from specific activities when I noticed that it was too much and had a bad Impact on my studies. So I guess you need to try several combinations for yourself and find out what works best for you.

Useful platform for students for questions about previous exams (you can also ask your questions and get replies from many students):

- Mechanical Engineering: Maschboard (you need to register with your RWTH Email address): <https://www.maschboard.de/forum/>
- Studydrive: [https://www.studydrive.net/unis/rwth-aachen/800?content=courses&phrase=&university\\_id=800&sort\\_type\\_courses=students&p=1](https://www.studydrive.net/unis/rwth-aachen/800?content=courses&phrase=&university_id=800&sort_type_courses=students&p=1)

PLEASE ASK ANY VISA RELATED QUESTIONS AT THE EMBASSY - RESIDENCE PERMIT QUESTIONS AT THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE - ENROLLMENT QUESTIONS AT THE ADMISSIONS DEPARTMENT - COURSE-RELATED QUESTIONS AT THE FACULTY

QUESTIONS ABOUT IT SERVICES (SUCH AS ACCESSING RWTH MAIL): PLEASE CHECK OUT IT SERVICES FAQ ON LATECOMER WEBSITES.