The different types of residency in Germany

In Germany, you will need a residence permit for your doctorate and your research activity. The type of residence permit necessary will vary depending on your individual situation. Doctoral candidates typically need the residence permit for the purpose of studying or for employment. For postdocs and visiting academics, there is the possibility of receiving a research visa. International doctoral candidates with children can also apply for visas for their spouse and children. Those who have lived in Germany for a certain period of time and have been employed in jobs subject to social security payments may be eligible to receive a permanent residence permit.

A good overview of information on residence permits is available here.

Residence for the purpose of doctorate/ university studies (§16 Residence Act)

A residence permit for the purpose of doctoral research allows for a total of 120 full days (8 hours per day) or 240 half days of employment per year (research assistant, academic employee only as half-time position 20 h/w). It must not be exceeded. The doctorate should be the main purpose, additional jobs are secondary employment only. For jobs that last longer, you will need a visa and a work permit. You may only exercise a gainful employment or get hired whilst possessing a residence permit/visa.

For receiving that kind of visa you need a health insurance certificate, a proof of financing, your university diplomas and probably language skills.

The application for a new visa or residence permit or for an extension of an existing one must always be submitted before the expiration of the existing one. Therefore, a confirmation of the intended course of study that has been signed and stamped by the International Office at FSU Jena is required. The first is usually sent to you along with the "Thoska" student card; later ones must be picked up in person. The permit is for a maximum of two years, or until the end of the given or extended training period. A student receiving a scholarship should take into account that the validity period of the visa often corresponds with the validity of the scholarship. After graduation (this does not apply to visiting students) a residence permit for the purpose of seeking work in Germany can be granted for a maximum of 18 months after the completion of studies (defined as the date of the last exam or test).

Residence for the purpose of employment (§ 18 Residence Act)

All non-EU citizens are allowed to work without a work permit for a maximum of 120 days a year (8 hours per day), or 240 half-days. Anything beyond that requires the approval of the foreigners' registration office (Ausländerbehörde) and the CAM (Central Placement Office Services of the Federal Employment Agency/ ZAV: Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung der Bundesagentur für Arbeit). Citizens of EU countries (except Croatia) do not need a work permit (see above).

For receiving a visa you also need a health insurance certificate and a proof of financing, e.g. employment agreement (see proof of financing) or proof of a job offer.

Contact points are the foreigners' registration office as well as the personnel department of the University of Jena.

The last day of the visa often coincides with the expiration of the employment agreement. If you have not defended your dissertation by then you should arrange an appointment at the foreigners' registration office eight weeks before the expiration date for extending your visa.

Research visa according to § 20 Residence Act (for postdocs, visiting researchers, NOT for the purpose of a doctorate only)

- Duration: at least three month up to 3 - 5 years
- The residence permit allows employment regarding the purpose of the research project and the related teaching.
- A requirement for the research visa is an agreement with the research institution.
Additionally to your visa you need a proof of financing (approx. 1500 €), adequate health insurance, BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) application of the research institution (reimbursement for public institutions)

- You do not need a permission granted by the German Federal Employment Agency, but the foreigners’ registration office.
- For your acceptance agreement according to § 20 AufenthaltG regarding your employment please ask the Personnel Department of the University of Jena.

BlueCard for highly qualified doctoral candidates

Academics from abroad who already have job offers with a certain minimum salary may apply for an "EU Blue Card" to pursue a skilled occupation for up to four years in Germany. You can apply for a Blue Card:

- If you have either a German, a comparable or a recognized foreign university degree and an employment agreement with an annual salary of at least € 44,800 (3733 euros per month) or in shortage occupations (scientists, mathematicians, engineers, doctors and IT professionals) an amount of € 34,944 (2912 euros per month).
- If you have either a German, a comparable or a recognized foreign university degree and an employment agreement with an annual salary of at least € 44,800 (3733 euros per month) or in shortage occupations (scientists, mathematicians, engineers, doctors and IT professionals) an amount of € 34,944 (2912 euros per month).

After a minimum of 21 months they may apply for a settlement permit. This is only possible under certain conditions, including making contributing payments towards the German pension insurance and possessing a good knowledge of German. Family members of Blue Card owners are able to work in Germany without a waiting period. Further information:

- Legal conditions for entry and continued residence of international students and scholars
- Information on the legal framework for the purposes of gainful employment of international students, graduate students, scientists, and other academics
- Guide to working in Germany

Visa for spouses and children (underage, unmarried): International doctoral candidates with family

If you want to bring family members along to Germany, you should note that they need a temporary residence permit, that you must prove an adequate living space and that your funding must be sufficient to cover the cost of living - rent, health insurance etc. - for all family members without relying on social welfare. The duration of your family members visas corresponds with the duration of your visa. (Perhaps a proof of German language skills is needed, but not for spouses, Blue Card owners or persons with temporary residence, e.g. for two years.) The German General Consulate in your home country can supply you with accurate information about these questions.

Be sure to allow plenty of time to complete the visa process for your dependents.

Partners applying to come to Germany for the purpose of family reunification must apply through the German embassy in their home country.

Permanent residence permit (§ 19 Residence Act)

- If you possess five years of work permit, secure sustenance, adequate living space and you are paying into the German pension insurance for at least 60 month and if necessary can prove your language skills or
- If you graduated from a German university and you own a residence permit for employment for two years, you are paying into the German pension insurance for two years and you can prove an adequate employment or
- Blue Card owner: 33 month of employment and paying into the German pension insurance for the same time or
Highly qualified persons: can get a settlement permit immediately, if the integration process is positive (e.g. position as institution president, team leader or similar highly qualified jobs are available)