

What do I have to consider when working while studying?

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There are many ways of earning money while you study, you can look for a job at your university or you can look for a typical student job in your town.

The rules

There are legal regulations covering the amount of hours international students are allowed to work. The rules vary depending on your country of origin:

Do you come from the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland?

→ If so, you are entitled to work as many hours as you want, without needing a special permit. However, if you want to work more than 20 hours per week, you will have to pay national insurance contributions (just like German students). This is to be avoided.

Do you come from a different country?

→ Then you are allowed to work 120 full days or 240 half days per year. You are not allowed to undertake self-employment. Anyone wanting to work more than this must seek permission from the Agentur für Arbeit (local employment agency) and the Ausländerbehörde (foreigners' registration office). It will depend on the level of unemployment in a federal state.

Exceptions for student assistants: the 120-day rule does not apply to student assistants. There are no restrictions on these jobs at the university. Nevertheless, you must inform the Ausländerbehörde (foreigners' registration office) if you want to work more hours. Not sure as to what kind of jobs these are? Then you should ideally obtain information from your local student services office or the Akademischen Auslandsamt (foreign student's office) at your university.

The labour law regulations applicable for international students are very strict. It is important to be aware of them: you may be deported if you infringe them.

Rules for students on language and preparatory courses

If you are taking a language course or want to take a preparatory course, you may generally only work if you have permission from the Federal Employment Agency (Agentur für Arbeit) and the Immigration Office (Ausländerbehörde) – and only during the recess period.

Rules for work placements

If during your academic studies you wish to complete a work placement during the semester breaks, that counts as „regular“ work. This also applies to unpaid work placements. Each day of the work placement will be deducted from your 120 day limit.

Exceptions for mandatory work placements: if your work placement is a so-called mandatory work placement as required by the study regulations, you can work for more hours.

Income

Germany introduced a **minimum wage** in 2015, which is redefined every two years. Since January 2021 it stands at 9.50 EUR per hour. How much you can earn however depends heavily on your skills, the industry in which you are working, and the regional labour market.

Taxes and Insurance

You can have a student job and earn up to 450 EUR per month without having to pay taxes. But if you regularly earn more than 450 EUR, you will need a tax number. A certain amount will be deducted from your salary each month, which you will get back if you submit a tax return at the end of the year.

If you are permanently employed in Germany, you will normally pay social security contributions. These include payments for health insurance, nursing care insurance, pension and unemployment insurance. You do not have to pay these contributions if you work less than two months at a stretch or less than 50 days throughout the year.