
Tips and Resources for International Students in Unusual Times

Dear international students,

For all of us, these times are very unusual and some of you may be especially confronted with new insecurities and challenges. We value you as important members of our university and have compiled some resources and tips for you, regarding

- 1) Staying on top of relevant information
- 2) Staying on top of your studies
- 3) Building and maintaining local connections in times of the pandemic
- 4) Maintaining physical and psychological well-being
- 5) Financial concerns
- 6) Planning for the future

1) Staying on top of relevant information:

- **Up-to-date** information from Freiburg **University** can be found here: https://www.uni-freiburg.de/universitaet-en/corona?set_language=en
- **FAQs** on regulations concerning your **studies** in times of the pandemic may help you navigate in the unusual semester: <https://www.uni-freiburg.de/universitaet-en/corona/studies-and-teaching>
- Sometimes it's hard to keep up with information in a country in which we didn't grow up, especially when we don't fluently speak/read the language. To stay **well informed**, see this compilation of **multilingual information** and advice from several federal ministries of the **German government**: <https://www.integrationsbeauftragte.de/ib-de/service/fragen-und-antworten/1731242-1731242?index=1731568>
- The **Handbook Germany** provides information concerning health, work, and public life in several languages: <https://handbookgermany.de/en.html>

Always, be **careful** about **fake news**, make use of your academic skills, check out, e.g.:

- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/about-thinking/201907/how-keep-fake-news-out-your-head>
- <http://cognitivebiasoftheday.com/story/10-cognitive-biases-explain-why-we-fall-for-fake-news>
- <https://www.zeit.de/digital/internet/2020-03/fake-news-coronavirus-falschnachrichten-luegen-panikmache>¹

¹ if your German reading skills are not ready for this, but you're in the mood to learn more, you may like to research these terms: Hindsight Bias, Framing-Effect, Confirmation Bias, Dunning-Kruger-Effect, Illusory Causality,

2) Staying on top of your studies:

The new situation with online classes poses new challenges and chances. The following offers may support you in maintaining your academic progress in times of online-studying:

- The University's e-learning service provides helpful resources on ILIAS, including a recorded **webinar in English** concerning **digital learning in the summer term 2020**. Students can access this via ILIAS using this link: https://ilias.uni-freiburg.de/goto.php?target=crs_1546286
- The **university library is expanding online services**: <https://www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/en/research/digital-library/additional-resources-corona/>
- At the university of Freiburg, learning opportunities inherent to public service (during and beyond times of the pandemic) are recognized and may be acknowledged with credits through the **Service Learning program**: <https://www.zfs.uni-freiburg.de/de/service-learning/service-learning>
- Kosmic offers free online self-learning opportunities. Check out Kosmic Interkulturalität concerning **academic culture in Germany** and **core competencies for your studies**, e.g., presentation skills: https://kosmic.uni-freiburg.de/goto.php?target=cat_69&lang=en
- This ILIAS-based course provides you with **self-learning opportunities to manage your studies in times of online-classes**, e.g., concerning learning strategies, planning tools and dealing with procrastination: https://ilias.uni-freiburg.de/goto.php?target=crs_1527385&client_id=unifreiburg
(Please note that, as of now, the course is only available in German. But even if you have limited German knowledge, it may serve as a simultaneous learning opportunity to improve your language skills and you may find ideas to further research these topics in a language of your choice.)
- Do you struggle with **academic writing**, especially since it may seem harder to obtain feedback when you are not interacting with your instructors face-to-face? Here's a guide provided by the global studies program: <https://www.gsp.uni-freiburg.de/gsp-login/students-2018/a-guide-to-academic-writing>
Here's a German **compilation on offers** concerning academic writing by the University Library (UB): https://www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/info_wiss_schreiben_Booklet_DL.pdf
- This may be the perfect time for you to **improve your German**. There are many online tools, e.g.: <http://refugeeswelcomemap.de/infoportal/deutsch-lernen/angebote-im-internet/>
- Students also have the option of organizing digital study spaces in ILIAS. You can set up a 'Student study group' and your own BigBlueButton video conferences here (see: https://ilias.uni-freiburg.de/goto.php?target=wiki_1229029_BigBlueButton&lang=en)
- If your classes require you to use **ZOOM** and it's new to you, refer to this info: https://www.rz.uni-freiburg.de/edvcorona/vidcon/zoom_folder/zoomguide-students

Gut Feeling Error, Slippery Slope Argument or also this classic paper:

http://www.cog.brown.edu/courses/cg195/pdf_files/fall05/CG195TverskyKahn1974.pdf

3) Building and maintaining local connections in times of the pandemic:

While providing you with great new experiences and insights, living in a foreign country can sometimes make you feel lonely and like it's harder to establish connections. While this may be a natural part of adjustment, here are some options to connect (many offers have been transferred into online formats):

- The student social service's (SWFR) **international club** is continuing activities like Café Multilingua and trivia nights online (sign up for their newsletter to keep up to date with new offers): <https://www.facebook.com/internationalclub.freiburg/> & <https://www.swfr.de/en/international/the-international-club/>
To stay informed about upcoming activities, you can sign up for their newsletter, here: <https://www.swfr.de/en/footer/kommunikationwerbung/newsletter/>
- Care to **find a buddy in these crazy times**? <https://www.swfr.de/en/international/the-international-club/buddy/>
- The Erasmus Student Network brings together **locals and international students**: <https://freiburg.esn-germany.de/about-us>
- **Practicing multilingual communication skills** is a great way to meet new people, find a tandem partner, e.g.,:
 - https://www.sli.uni-freiburg.de/selflearning/tandem/tandemfront?set_language=en
 - <https://www.tandem.net/de/partner/tandempartner-freiburg-im-breisgau>
- Join the university's **intercultural mentoring** program: <https://www.mentoring.uni-freiburg.de/intercultural>
- **Joining a student initiative** may be another good way to meet fellow students from other major who share common interests. There are many initiatives concerning all sorts of subjects, e.g.:
 - Entrepreneurship: <https://foundersclub-freiburg.de/>
 - Education for all: <https://unifueralle.jimdofree.com/english/> & <https://weitblicker.org/en/freiburg/>
- **Getting involved with local activities and groups beyond university** settings works even if you don't speak German. Check out, for instance, gardening and other options here:
 - <https://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/en/get-involved/>
 - <https://www.internations.org/freiburg-expats>

Note: Times of uncertainty are known to (re)activate stereotypes and in the worst case racism (for an example of this in pandemic times, see <https://boasblogs.org/witnessingcorona/at-the-border-of-us-and-them/>). If you feel that you are being **ostracized or discriminated** against:

- The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency provides **information and resources**, including **confidential counselling** free of charge: https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/Home/home_node.html
- Please report your experience to the **students union's antidiscrimination division**: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScrUX9igml5p8vFq2pCSW32b9MvYEjnJoYu_xFcQ7nui4bJQag/viewform?fbclid=IwAR05IYsLhYfgamqyTlpXAliHzHQXeRB5lwSqIFq7JS_pT-lf6MvBf239nI0

- Prof. Riescher, **Vice-President for Research Integrity, Gender and Diversity** can be found here: http://www.uni-freiburg.de/administration/rektorat/prorektorin-rgv-en?set_language=en
- Being excluded hurts, also in digital interaction, **take it seriously!** This article on ostracism includes respective research findings: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/unified-theory-happiness/201612/5-ways-cope-ostracism>

4) Maintaining psychological and physical well-being:

- If you feel ill and would like **support in finding a local physician with whom to communicate in a language other than German**, the Student Social Services can help: <https://www.swfr.de/en/social-services/international-students/>
You may also contact your general physician (preferably by phone!) to ask for guidance concerning psychological healthcare (see more information below).

Not going to class regularly and have additional things to worry about comes with new challenges for body and mind. Here are some tips:

- Try to establish a regular **schedule** for yourself and stick to it. **Designate specific times** to studying and leisure activities. **Eat** regularly, proper nourishment not only helps your body but also your mind.
- Give your body frequent breaks from physically uncomfortable study positions. Go for **walks or bike rides**, explore your surroundings and/or **exercise!** Fun tutorials can also be found online.
- Here's an overview on **how to deal with isolation and quarantine**: https://www.boep.or.at/download/5e7b4e123c15c8575f000011/20200325_COVID-19_Infosheet_English.pdf
- A helpful resource on **the science of well-being** may be: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/the-science-of-well-being>
- To **cope with stress**, this free online training may help: <https://www.studicare.com/mindfulness>
- Try to make the best of the time on your hands. Find **joyful and meaningful** things to do, e.g.,
 - Find ways to **get engaged with the local community to help others**, e.g.
 - <https://www.freiburg.de/pb/1534704.html>
 - <https://www.badische-zeitung.de/corona-hilfe-in-freiburg-alle-hilfsangebote>
 - Maybe there is an old **new year's resolution** that you never quite managed to pursue? Here's a tool: <https://woopmylife.org/woop-1>
- Practice **physical distancing not social isolation!**
As international students, you are likely better equipped to do this than many of your German peers. Maybe you can support them?
How about:
 - Every day: Ask at least one person you care about how they are doing (over the phone, internet,...) and share with them how and what you are doing

- Regular dinner together via online-meeting platforms?
- Practicing the same online-exercise video while talking over speaker-phone (until you're too out of breath? 😊)
- Watching the same series/movie at the same time and talking about it on the phone after?
- Going old-school and writing a letter to someone you care about?

Note: If you feel you or one of your fellow students is in need for professional support to cope with anxiety and other issues, here are some places to turn to:

<https://www.swfr.de/en/social-services/psychological-counselling/>

<https://www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/psych/verhaltensempfehlungen-corona-krise.html>

<https://ifightdepression.com/en/>

<https://efl-fr.de/html/content/welcome879.html>

<http://www.telefonseelsorge-freiburg.de/cms/>

<https://www.beratungsstelle-freiburg.de/html/startseite.html>

<https://www.hellobetter.de/corona-krise/>

In emergencies, here are local clinics:

- <https://www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/psych.html>
- <https://www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/psychosomatik.html>

For a better understanding of the German mental health care system, consider the following:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279513/>

https://www.bapk.de/fileadmin/user_files/bapk/projekte/bapk_ratgeber_02_gesundheitssystem_ENGL_v2_FERTIG.pdf

5) Financial concerns:

For several reasons, the pandemic may have caused financial worries for you. Note that the special challenges international students are currently facing has been noticed also by academic journalists, e.g.: <https://www.jmwiarda.de/2020/04/01/was-wird-aus-uns/>

If you are concerned that you may not be able to continue your studies due to financial distress, please refer to this **overview of financial support options provided by the SWFR**:

<https://www.swfr.de/en/money/corona-emergency-aid/>

Here you can apply for **Emergency Student Aid**: <https://www.swfr.de/en/money/application-for-the-emergency-student-aid-of-the-university-freiburg/>

The University of Freiburg's **Central Academic Advising** (in the Student Service Center) also provides individual **consultation on scholarships**. You may schedule an appointment at: <http://www.studium.uni-freiburg.de/de/beratung/terminvereinbarung>

Lost your job? Check out the **job-placement-service of the SWFR**:
<https://www.swfr.de/en/money/studijob/job-placement-service/>

Due to the pandemic, Germany is in need of harvest workers. Your chance to contribute and connect while earning money: <https://www.daslandhilft.de/>

The Deutsches Studentenwerk, also provides **information on financing options**:
<http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en/home/>

Note: Should you know someone who is in a financially solid position and interested in helping students, maybe you want to bring this information on the **student emergency fund** to their attention: http://www.pr.uni-freiburg.de/pm-en/press-releases-2020/launch-of-the-201cstudiennothilfe201d-student-emergency-fund?set_language=en

6) Planning for the future:

This may be the perfect time to **research future options** such as Master's programs and potential employers, update your resume, or finally write that paper...

- Found a job you'd like to apply for? Wondering how to **write an application** in Germany? Here's **advice and information on working in Germany**: <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/jobs/applying-for-a-job/application/>
- If you are interested in options of **obtaining a PhD**, you can find information and advising at the **University of Freiburg's International Graduate Academy**:
https://www.frs.uni-freiburg.de/en/iga-en?set_language=en
- There are **free online courses preparing you for success in the workplace**. Here are some examples:
 - <https://www.edx.org/course/unlocking-your-employability>
 - <https://www.edx.org/course/attending-a-networking-event>
 - <https://www.coursera.org/learn/europe>
 - <https://www.edx.org/course/launching-new-ventures>

(Note: If you are looking to go into business for yourself: Advice for entrepreneurs is also provided through the University's Founder's Office:
<https://www.gruenden.uni-freiburg.de/>)

You have suggestions concerning this compilation? Or you know of further helpful resources you'd like to recommend? Please contact: Dr. Lisa Hüther-Pape (Project EASI-FR, Service Center Studium / Abteilung Lehrentwicklung) at lisa.huether@zv.uni-freiburg.de