



Study Abroad

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



Germany

ACADEMIC YEAR IN FREIBURG (AYF)

PROGRAM HANDBOOK



Germany

Academic Year in Freiburg (AYF)

Program Handbook

2025-2026

The Academic Year in Freiburg (AYF) is a study abroad program operated by a consortium of Michigan State University, the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in conjunction with the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. AYF very much welcomes the participation from students enrolled at other US colleges and universities.

This program handbook supplements handbooks or materials you receive from your home university and aims to provide you with the most up-to-date information and advice available at the time of printing. Changes may occur before your departure or while you are abroad.

Questions regarding your program abroad (housing options, facilities abroad, etc.) as well as questions relating to your relationship with your host university, the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg, or academics (e.g., course credit and equivalents, registration deadlines, etc.) should be directed to the study abroad office at your home university.

Please read through the handbook carefully prior to departure. It will help you prepare for all aspects of your AYF experience, from academics to managing daily life in Germany.

This program handbook contains the following information:

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Please Note: All price information quoted in this handbook is provided for informational and planning purposes. To the best of our knowledge, prices are accurate and up to date as of January 2025. Currency exchange rates fluctuate, and vendors may change prices without notice, therefore AYF cannot make guarantees regarding the availability of specific prices noted herein. Thank you for your understanding.

Contact Information

Your primary contacts in Freiburg will be:

Professor Helmut Puff

AYF Academic Director 2025-2026

Email: puffh@umich.edu

Ulrich (Ulli) Struve

AYF Program Director

Email: ulrich.struve@ayf.uni-freiburg.de

Will Luebke

AYF Program Assistant

Email: assistenz@ayf.uni-freiburg.de

The location of the AYF Program Center is as follows:

Program Center Location:

Academic Year in Freiburg

Dietler-Passage

Gerberau 5 / Grünwälderstraße 10-14

D-79098 Freiburg

Germany

The two mailing addresses for the AYF Program Center are as follows*:

Mailing Address (for regular U.S. Mail):

Academic Year in Freiburg

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität

D-79085 Freiburg

Germany

Mailing Address (for packages/letters sent by courier services such as DHL, FedEx, UPS):

Academic Year in Freiburg

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität - Poststelle

Platz der Universität 3

D-79098 Freiburg

Germany

**(Please note the differing ZIP codes and addresses for mailings sent via U.S. Mail and by courier service. Only courier services require a street address, but please do not have any mailings sent to the center location at the Dietler-Passage.)*

AYF Program Center telephone numbers:

Main office: +49-761-319 68 551

Prof. Puff +49-761-319 68 553

Fax: +49-761-319 68 554

AYF homepage: <http://www.ayf.uni-freiburg.de>

Michigan State University

Office for Education Abroad
International Center
427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 109
East Lansing, MI 48824
Tel: 517-353-8920, Fax: 517-432-2082
Web: <http://educationabroad.msu.edu>

<i>For Administrative Matters:</i> Hailee Ridge Office for Education Abroad Tel: 517-432-8424 ridgehai@msu.edu	<i>For Academic Advising:</i> Professor Liz Mittman Dept. of Linguistics, Languages, and Cultures Tel: 517-355-5170 mittman@msu.edu Ben Davis Dept. of Linguistics, Languages, and Cultures davis500@msu.edu
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University of Iowa

International Programs
1111 University Capitol Centre
Iowa City, IA 52242
Tel: 319-335-0353, Fax: 319-335-0343
Web: <http://international.uiowa.edu/study-abroad>

<i>For Administrative Matters, Grades & Student Records:</i> Cory Petersen Senior Study Abroad Advisor & Program Coordinator Tel: 319 335-0353 cory-petersen@uiowa.edu	<i>For Academic Advising:</i> Professor Glenn Ehrstine Director of Undergraduate Studies Associate Professor Tel: 319-335-2276 glenn-ehrstine@uiowa.edu
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University of Michigan

Center for Global and Intercultural Study (CGIS)
Suite 200 Weiser Hall
500 Church Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
Tel: 734-764-4311, Fax: 734-764-3229
Web: <http://lsa.umich.edu/cgis>

<i>For Program Advising:</i> Will Clancy Intercultural Programs Advisor Tel: 734 764-4311 wclancy@umich.edu	<i>For German Academic Advising:</i> Kalli Federhofer Tel: 734-277-7341 kallimz@umich.edu Mary Rodena-Krasan Tel: 734 615-6335 mkrasan@umich.edu
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University of Wisconsin-Madison

International Academic Programs (IAP)

301 Red Gym, 716 Langdon Street

Madison, WI 53706

Tel: 608-265-6329

Web: www.studyabroad.wisc.edu

<p><i>For Program Advising:</i> Andy Quackenbush Senior Study Abroad Advisor & Program Manager Tel: 608 265-6329 andy.quackenbush@wisc.edu Schedule with Andy - Starfish</p>	<p><i>For Forms, CERs, & Transcripts:</i> Emma Hetzel Enrollment Manager Tel: 608 265-6329 emma.hetzel@wisc.edu Schedule with Emma - Starfish</p>	<p><i>For Academic Advising:</i> Dr. Jeanne Schueller Director of Undergraduate Studies (German) jmschuel@wisc.edu</p>
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Emergency Contact

In the case of an emergency, you can contact the on-site staff in Freiburg for assistance.

		Intl. Access	Country Code	City Code	Phone Number
Prof. Puff	From the U.S.	011	49	761	76 99 84 49
	From Germany			0761	76 99 84 49
	From Freiburg				76 99 84 49
Cell phone	From the U.S.	011	49	170	781 65 46
Cell phone	From Germany			0170	781 65 46
Ulli Struve	From the U.S.	011	49	7641	95 75 84
	From Germany			07641	95 75 84
	From Freiburg			07641	95 75 84
Cell phone	From the U.S.	011	49	170	571 88 78
Cell phone	From Germany			0170	571 88 78
Will Luebke	From the U.S.	011	49	163	171 67 99
Cell Phone	From Germany			0163	171 67 99

Emergency phone numbers in Germany:

- Police: 110
- Fire/Ambulance: 112

The IAP office in Madison serves as a general emergency backup for the on-site team at all times. If you need to contact IAP, call the main office line at 1+ 608 265-6329 between 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (U.S. central time) Monday-Friday; after hours or on weekends, call the IAP staff on call at 1+ **608 516-9440**.

Embassy Registration – Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

All program participants who are U.S. citizens must register at the U.S. Embassy before departing for Germany as this will help in case of a lost passport or other mishap. You can register on-line at:

<https://mytravel.state.gov/s/step>

If you are not a U.S. citizen, please register at your home country's embassy or consulate.

Michigan State University as well as University of Iowa students do not have to register themselves with the Embassy, as the MSU Office of Study Abroad and UI Study Abroad do it for them.

Embassy of the United States Berlin Consular Section – American Citizen Services Pariser Platz 2 14191 Berlin Mailing Address: Clayallee 170 14191 Berlin Tel: 49-30-8305-0 (24-hour number; consular staff will respond to emergency calls after hours.) Fax: (030) 8305-1215	U.S. Consulate General Frankfurt (Responsible for Baden-Württemberg) American Citizen Services – Passport Unit Gießener Straße 30 60435 Frankfurt Tel: (069) 7535-0 (24-hour number; consular staff will respond to emergency calls after hours.) Fax: (069) 7535-2252 Public Transportation: From the main train station (Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof) take the U5 going to Preungesheim, exit at the Gießener Straße stop.
Additional consulates are located in Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Leipzig, and Munich.	

The U.S. embassy and consulates in Germany are closed on American and German holidays.

For more information see: <https://de.usembassy.gov/contact/>

Program Dates 2025-2026

Arrival in Freiburg / Check-in at train station (<i>Hauptbahnhof</i>)	Monday, September 1, 2025
ORIENTATION I: ● Registration, group meetings	Tuesday, Sept. 2 – Wednesday, Sept. 10
ORIENTATION II: ● Language course ● Academic orientation	Monday, September 8 – Friday, October 2 Tuesday, Sept. 9 and Wednesday, Sept. 10
ORIENTATION III: ● Academic advising	Monday, September 15 – Friday, Sept. 26
ORIENTATION EVENTS & FIELD TRIPS: ● Basel, Freiburg, Alsace, Black Forest	Sunday, Sept. 7, Saturday, Sept. 13, Sunday, Sept. 21, and October 3
Free time to travel ... or meet other students during <i>Erstiwoche</i>	Saturday, October 4 – Sunday, October 12 <i>which offers special events for newcomers</i>
WINTERSEMESTER 2025-2026	
Freiburg University, Pädag. Hochschule, and AYF <i>Wintersemester</i> classes begin	Monday, October 13 <i>Duration of Wintersemester: 15 weeks</i>
Alsace History Field Trip	Saturday, October 18
Tentative Registration Deadline	Friday, October 24
<i>Allerheiligen</i> (holiday)	Saturday, November 1
Final Registration Deadline and Deadline to Add a Course	Friday, November 7
AYF Thanksgiving Celebration	Friday, November 28
Pass/Fail Deadline and Deadline to Drop a Course without entry on transcript	Friday, December 5
CER Deadline (Credit Equivalents Request forms due)	Friday, December 12
Holiday break	Sat., Dec. 20, 2025 – Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026
Classes resume	Wednesday, January 7
Mandatory Group Meeting	Thursday, January 8, 4-6 p.m.
<i>Wintersemester</i> classes end	Friday, February 6 (University, PH, AYF)
Academic advising	Feb. 9-20 (exact dates to be finalized)

Deadline for submitting all <i>Wintersemester</i> papers to instructors, copies to AYF	Friday, February 20, 2026
<i>Vorlesungsfreie Zeit</i> a.k.a. <i>Semesterferien</i> Break (10 weeks)	Saturday, February 7 – Sunday, April 19 (University, PH, AYF)
<i>Ostern</i> (holiday)	Friday – Monday, April 3-6
SOMMERSEMESTER 2026	
Freiburg University, PH, and AYF <i>Sommersemester</i> classes begin	Monday, April 20 <i>Duration of Sommersemester: 13 weeks</i>
Straßburg Field Trip / EU Parliament	Saturday, April 25
Tentative Registration Deadline	Thursday, April 30
<i>Tag der Arbeit</i> (holiday)	Friday, May 1
Final Registration Deadline and Deadline to Add a Course	Wednesday, May 13
<i>Christi Himmelfahrt</i> (holiday)	Thursday, May 14
AYF Field Trip to Berlin	Thursday, May 14-18
University break (Pentecost)	Saturday, Mai 23 – Sunday, Mai 31
<i>Fronleichnam</i> (holiday)	Thursday, June 4
Pass/Fail Deadline and Deadline to Drop a Course without entry on transcript	Friday, June 5
Mandatory Group Meeting (end-of-year administrative procedures)	June 15-17 (date and time to be finalized)
CER Deadline (Credit Equivalents Request Forms due)	Friday, June 19
Farewell Barbecue	Saturday, July 18
Freiburg University, PH, and AYF <i>Sommersemester</i> classes end	Friday, July 24, 2026
Deadline for submitting all <i>Summersemester</i> papers to instructors, copies to AYF	Friday, August 7, 2026

Notes:

All AYF program participants are firmly expected to arrive in Freiburg on Monday, September 1, 2025, which for most participants will mean departing from the U.S. to Frankfurt or Zurich on August 31, 2025. The first orientation event will be held on the evening of September 1. Additional details concerning arrival, and the orientation schedule will be made available via email. You should book your flight home for a date no earlier than two weeks after the end of the Sommersemester, i.e., August 7, 2026, to allow time to finish your academic work.

NB: Administrative dates may be subject to change; academic deadlines are firmly set

Preparing for Your Departure to Freiburg

Pre-Departure Documents

The study abroad office on your campus will provide the AYF forms that you will need to fill out before your departure. In addition to these forms, you must submit one or two digital passport-style photos with a high resolution to the AYF office in Freiburg. Using this photo, AYF will prepare actual German-size biometric passport photos. Please pay careful attention to the instructions for preparing these photos contained in your package of AYF registration forms. These photos are needed for various official registration procedures in Germany and for AYF records. It is not necessary to bring additional passport photos with you to Freiburg. If you find that you need more passport photos once you are in Freiburg, there are inexpensive photo printing options near the program center.

Immigration Documents

PASSPORT

A passport is needed to travel to Germany and to obtain your student visa. Apply immediately for a passport if you do not already have one. Passport information and application forms can be found on the U.S. State Department website (www.state.gov). If you already have your passport, make sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the length of your stay abroad.

VISA

For U.S. citizens, no visa is required to enter Germany for tourist or business stays up to 90 days. In accordance with German law, all foreigners who stay longer than 3 months must acquire a residence permit (*Aufenthaltsgenehmigung*) – in effect, a visa. During your first week in Freiburg, in an orientation session devoted entirely to registration matters, the AYF program staff will guide you through the paperwork required for university enrollment, for your *Aufenthaltsgenehmigung*, and for local address registration with Freiburg authorities.

Please note: If you are already spending the summer prior to AYF in Germany (on an internship, for example), you may be required to apply for an interim residence permit called a “Fiktionsbescheinigung”, depending on when exactly you entered the country. Please alert AYF staff to your early entry into the country well in advance of your arrival. Citizens of countries other than the U.S. or European Union should check with the nearest German consulate regarding possible visa requirements.

Handling Money Abroad

The U.S.-style checking account is unknown in Germany. Most bank business is conducted by bank transfers (*Überweisungen*) from one account to another. You will need to open a *Girokonto* – a bank transfer account. During your first week in Freiburg, AYF will help you open a *Girokonto* with online banking with the Volksbank, a national bank that has branch offices all around Freiburg and near the dorms. For this process to go smoothly, it is very important that you know your Social Security Number which the bank needs to comply with U.S. legal requirements (so-called FATCA laws). Please note, there is a monthly account fee (currently set at about €5/month for students).

For set payments made on a regular basis, you can authorize the Volksbank to make automatic transfers from your *Girokonto* on an ongoing basis (*Dauerauftrag*). Alternatively, you can authorize institutions to make one-time or repeated withdrawals from your account (*Einzugsermächtigung*). Your dorm room rent will automatically be withdrawn from your account at or near the beginning of each month.

It is your responsibility to make sure you have sufficient funds in your account to cover all your debits and withdrawals, be they for rent payments or purchases paid with the debit card for your Freiburg account. If your account is overdrawn, you will be notified that the transfer has not gone through, and you will be subject to a fee of roughly €10 (or substantially more if vendors subcontract the collection of failed debit card purchases). Also, once you are notified that an automatic transfer has failed because of insufficient funds, it is not enough to go to the bank and deposit more money into your account, since the failed automatic withdrawal will usually not be repeated at a later date. Instead, you must make a one-time *Überweisung* at the bank to cover the missed transfer.

German banking hours are generally from 9 AM until noon, and again from 2–4 PM, Monday through Friday. Most banks stay open until 6 PM on Thursdays but are closed on Saturdays. The Volksbank on Bismarckallee (across from the northern end of the train station) is open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday to Friday and 9:00 AM to 6 PM on Thursday. The self-service branch at Bertoldsbrunnen has even more extended hours, and the ATM is accessible around the clock.

Transferring Money

If you have your own bank account in the U.S., you can use your personal checks to deposit money into your Freiburg account. This may be useful for family members, too, who can deposit money directly into your U.S. account instead of mailing a check to Germany. A U.S. personal check drawn on a third-party account will take five to six weeks to be credited to your Freiburg account. Checks drawn on your own personal U.S. account will be credited to your Volksbank account after a few days, in most cases no later than after a week. Fees of ca. €50 are assessed for processing such a check which clearly impacts the attractiveness of this option. Do not have any checks sent directly to your bank in Freiburg. Instead, have them mailed to you, preferably c/o the AYF Program Center rather than to your dormitory address, for the sake of security, and bring a check book for your personal U.S. checking account with you.

The simplest way to handle cash transfers from the U.S. is to obtain an ATM debit card for your U.S. checking account. Credit cards are also very convenient. Be sure to arrange an **internationally accepted ATM card and PIN** with your U.S. bank before you depart for Freiburg. With the ATM card, you will be able to withdraw cash (in euros) from an ATM (*Geldautomat*) and have it debited (in U.S. dollars) to your U.S. account. ATM withdrawals use a fairly favorable exchange rate and do not entail the additional charges that could be imposed for processing checks, although your U.S. bank will probably impose a service fee for each international withdrawal (rates typically vary from 1 to 4%). Your U.S. bank establishes the upper limit on the amount that can be withdrawn at any one time and within any 24-hour period. You should inquire as to these figures and – if necessary – raise them at your bank prior to leaving for Germany. You may want to withdraw a large amount – up to the limit – at one time to minimize transaction fees (but make sure you don't misplace all the cash you just withdrew!). In any case, it is prudent to verify the policies and fee structure of your U.S. bank (flat fee vs. percentage, etc.) prior to departure to aid in your planning.

Both *VISA* and *MASTERCARD* can be used to obtain cash advances at most banks and many ATMs. Again, you must request an international four-digit PIN number from your issuing bank or card company. Also, find out what your credit card company charges for a cash advance. Freiburg does not have a branch office of American Express, but you may find an American Express card useful on your travels elsewhere in Europe.

A wire transfer is an option that is especially appropriate for bringing larger sums of money to Germany. This may be useful to you if you choose to transfer your funds on a quarterly basis or only once or twice

per semester. The AYF office staff will assist you with the procedures at the receiving bank. The Volksbank in Freiburg has a special routing sheet available for such transactions from the U.S. that is available from the AYF Program Center and on the AYF web page at <http://www.ayf.uni-freiburg.de/ayf/guides>. It would also be wise to speak to your U.S. bank prior to departure about its procedures and fees for wire transfers.

Students have also reported positive experiences with newer services such as Wise (formerly TransferWise). Fees for these services are generally cheaper than for traditional international transfers. But some services have hidden money exchange fees. One way to decide whether a service is reputable is to determine whether exchange fees are fixed and transparent.

Each of the ways to transfer money – personal check, ATM card, credit card, wire transfer, TransferWise or a similar financial service – has its advantages and disadvantages. It is therefore advisable that you arrange to have more than one of these options available to you when traveling to Europe. That way you can try them out and discover what works best for you in different situations. More importantly, you will have a backup in case a *Geldautomat* does not accept your ATM card or a personal check takes an unexpectedly long time to clear.

Monthly Living Expenses

Keep in mind that the currency exchange rate does fluctuate. Periodically, you should check the web for the latest value of the dollar (e.g., at www.xe.com/ucc). Students and family members must bear in mind that because of the fluctuation of exchange rates and variable rates of inflation, it is impossible to quote an absolutely firm dollar figure for monthly living expenses.

Living expenses in September will be higher than in the following months, both because of some initial one-time expenses and also because you will need some time to establish an economical lifestyle. In addition, some expenses that you might have expected to pay following your arrival will already be billed to you before your departure by your home university (i.e., health insurance, liability insurance, student services fee, residence permit fee). Details on this process will be provided to you well in advance of your departure.

It would be advisable to bring:

300 euros	Enough cash to cover incidentals, such as meals, etc., during your first few days. Your bank can order cash in euros for you if they do not have it on hand, or you can exchange dollars for euros at any international airport in the U.S. or Europe. Also, you can use your ATM card at machines in any European airport to withdraw cash (in euros) from your home bank account as soon as you arrive in Europe.
2000 euros	<p>Personal check drawn on your own U.S. account to establish a bank account, to cover various extra expenses associated with settling in, and for your first month's living expenses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first month's rent (between €290 and €465, depending on the room) • €400 room lease security deposit, €500 if you opted for an efficiency apartment plus €25 processing fee and €75 bedding starter set <p><i>Please note: The first rent payment, processing fee, bedding set, and security deposit will be withdrawn from your Freiburg bank account at the end of September, shortly before the rent for October is due. You must plan on having sufficient funds on hand for all rent-related withdrawals no later than the third week of September.</i></p>

Starting in October, you will need approximately €700-800 per month for rent, food, and other basic living expenses. The amount you will spend is, however, ultimately an individual matter and, as in the U.S., depends upon your own personal lifestyle and resources. The €700-800 figure does not cover extensive vacation travel or major purchases.

Toward the end of your stay in Freiburg, AYF staff will provide you with detailed information on the process of settling final bills, collecting your room deposit, closing your bank account, and collecting the balance or having the balance transferred back to you in the U.S. in due time.

Packing

Germany has a far more moderate climate than the American Midwest, but the weather can get nasty in the winter. Be prepared for rain, snow, chilly winds, and gray skies. Bring an umbrella or plan on buying one shortly after you arrive. Most things you want will be available once you arrive in Freiburg, so **do not overpack**. Do be aware, though, that some over-the-counter medications may only be available by prescription. Similar kinds of toiletries are available; but if you are partial to a particular brand, you may want to bring enough for several months. Shipping cost, which can add up, is another factor to consider when deciding what to bring, ship, or purchase on site.

Suggested Items to Bring:

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ▪ hiking boots | ▪ towels / washcloths | ▪ one nice outfit* |
| ▪ hat / gloves | ▪ favorite toiletries | ▪ passport pouch, money belt |
| ▪ raincoat / umbrella | ▪ headache / cold medicine | ▪ laptop computer |
| ▪ travel guide | ▪ journal / diary | ▪ pictures / postcards of your home |
| ▪ favorite recipes / American measuring cups | | ▪ flip-flops for shower |

*We recommend bringing a button-down shirt and dress pants (plus a blazer, if you like) or a dress that could be worn to a reception or other similar event.

Also consult the section in this Handbook on customs issues below. You may decide to pack and ship specific items differently in light of customs regulations.

Travel and Arrival Information

Flight

The AYF program does not organize a group flight, so you are responsible for making your own travel arrangements. You are firmly expected to arrive in Freiburg on September 1, 2025, which for most participants will mean departing on August 31, 2025. The first orientation event will be held on the evening of September 1. Please remember to turn in your completed “travel information form” to your study abroad office by the deadline set by your home university staff.

Note: Should your luggage get lost in transit, feel free to provide the airline with the AYF mailing address (Academic Year in Freiburg, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität – Poststelle, Platz der Universität 3, 79098 Freiburg) and telephone contact information (use 0170 – 571 88 78, Ulli Struve’s cell phone). Late delivery of your luggage at your dorm would be quite difficult since you will be busy with orientation activities and not at home waiting for the airline courier. Upon

arrival in Freiburg, inform Ulli Struve that you are dealing with lost luggage so that he can assist with additional arrangements as needed.

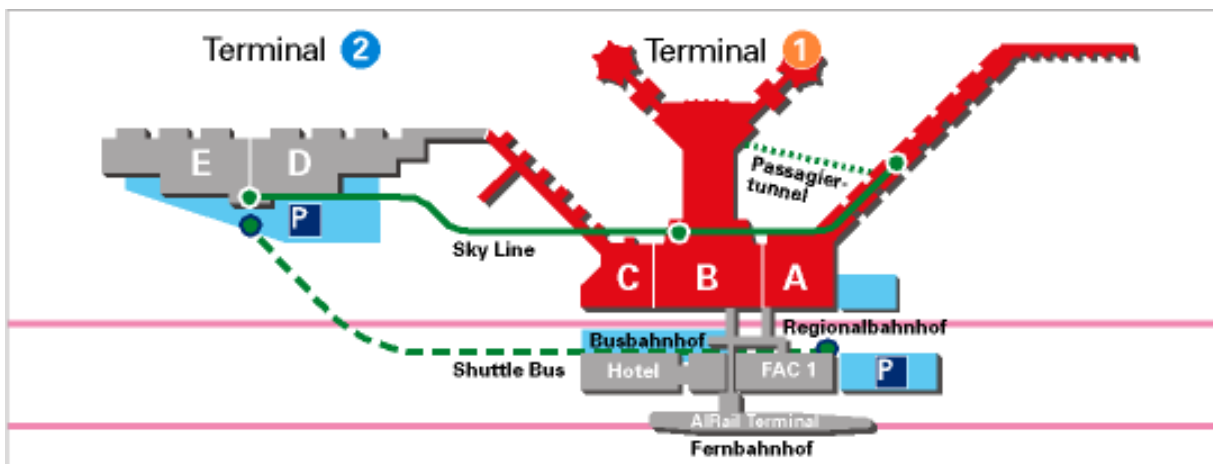
It is helpful to consider the total travel cost when looking for a flight. Some questions you may wish to consider are: Does your preferred airline allow one or two suitcases without additional charges? It is possible to book the train trip from the airport to Freiburg as part of the airline ticket at a lower rate? Can a student travel agency offer discounts?

It is generally cheapest and most convenient to fly from the U.S. to Frankfurt. Flying to Basel/Mulhouse or to Zurich are also options. Please consult the AYF website's section for "Incoming Students" for information on ground transportation to Freiburg from these airports. If you can, avoid flights with additional layovers since they add significant uncertainty to your first day of travel.

Travel to Freiburg from the Frankfurt am Main Airport

The train is the best way to travel between Frankfurt am Main and Freiburg. The journey takes about two to three hours, and a one-way ticket costs about €70 (or about half that if you decide to book a specific train well in advance with the *Supersparpreis* or buy a *BahnCard*), depending on the particular connection you select and the type of train(s) you will be boarding. There is a train station in a building immediately adjacent to Terminal 1 B (see the map below). On disembarking from your flight, you will first proceed through passport check, then claim your luggage, and finally pass through customs control. If you arrive in Terminal 2, you can take either a shuttle bus or the so-called Sky Line to get to Terminal 1. Both services are free. The shuttle bus will drop you off outside the entrance to the *Bahnhof*. You need to follow the signs reading *Fernbahnhof* (long-distance trains). Do not confuse it with the *Regionalbahnhof* (regional commuter trains). You ought to allow yourself one to two hours between your flight arrival time and train departure time.

Map of Frankfurt Airport:



You may buy your train ticket before you depart for Germany, either at many U.S. travel agencies or online at www.bahn.de or by using the *DB Navigator* app (the new preferred mode of contact-less purchasing, ticketing, and checking into your seat). Alternatively, you can buy a train ticket right at the Deutsche Bahn ticket sales and information counter in the airport station, or at one of the kiosks. If you purchase your ticket online or with the *DB Navigator* app, make sure to pay with the same credit or debit card that you intend to bring with you. If you are considering the purchase of a *BahnCard*, a

discount card for train travel in Germany, then it is easiest to purchase it in the DB Navigator app before your trip; DB accepts credit cards, Apple pay, or PayPal, among others. There is no physical *BahnCard* anymore – it lives digitally on your smart phone. Generally, a *BahnCard* quickly pays for itself. For more details on various options see “Trains” under “Transportation” in the “Living Abroad” section of this handbook or consult www.bahn.de.

It is speedy and convenient to take an ICE (*InterCityExpress*) train. On the ICE that travels directly from Frankfurt airport to the final destination Basel, the trip to Freiburg takes about 2 hours and 10 minutes. There are direct trains from Frankfurt airport to Freiburg every two hours. Every other hour, the train connection entails one transfer in Mannheim. This transfer is not strenuous: in Mannheim, you usually need to walk just a few yards to the opposite side of the platform at which you have arrived, and do not have to go up and down stairs to reach a different platform. An hour and a half after leaving Mannheim, you will arrive at the Freiburg Hauptbahnhof. When looking at this trip in the DB App, be sure to specify your departing from Frankfurt (M) Flughafen. Frankfurt HBF is a different station and not at the airport.

You can check out possible train departure times and connections on the Internet: www.bahn.de.

Arrival Day – September 1, 2025

Detailed information about arrival day and the reception center will be provided to you by email with your housing assignment information in late June or early July. Activities include a welcome pizza party on the evening of September 1. The full program for Orientation Week will be provided upon arrival.

In case you experience significant delays in your travel to Freiburg, please note that there is a “Plan B” that involves a secondary meeting point. On arrival day, the reception center at the Hauptbahnhof will be staffed from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Should you arrive in Freiburg after 5 p.m., please be prepared to come to the Studentensiedlung, the Stusie, where the welcome pizza party will be held. It is easiest to take a taxi, but it is possible to take streetcar no. 1 toward Landwasser to go to Stusie. More detailed instructions and a map of the Stusie will be included in your housing information mailing. We strongly suggest you print out the instructions for “Arrival Day – Plan B” and keep it in your carry-on luggage.

The arrival of the entire group of AYF students requires preparation and coordination and it will not be possible to move into your dorm room prior to September 1. We therefore strongly suggest arriving in Freiburg on September 1. If you arrive in Freiburg before September 1, you will need to find accommodations elsewhere, such as a hostel, where prices for a bed in a shared room start at around 20 euros. Hotel prices for a single room start at around 70 euros. Here are some suggestions:

Jugendherberge Freiburg Kartäuserstraße 151 79104 Freiburg Tel: (0-761) 6 76 56 JH-Freiburg@jugendherberge.de freiburg.jugendherberge-bw.de	Black Forest Hostel Kartäuserstr. 33 79102 Freiburg Tel: (0-761) 881 78 70 backpacker@blackforest-hostel.de www.blackforest-hostel.de
Viavelo Hotel Am Bischofskreuz 15 79114 Freiburg Tel: (0-761) 8 26 88 mail@viavelo-hotel.de	Hotel Minerva Poststraße 8 79098 Freiburg Tel: (0-761) 38649-0 info@minerva-freiburg.de

https://viavelo-hotel.de/ (across the street from the <i>Studentensiedlung</i>)	https://minerva-freiburg.de (5-minute walk from train station)
When calling from the U.S., dial "011-49-761" instead of "0-761."	

You will have to make your own reservations. For additional information on hotels, check out the homepage of the city of Freiburg (www.freiburg.de). A hotel database is available by clicking on the link <https://visit.freiburg.de/en/plan-your-trip/accommodations-in-freiburg>

Please note that "plug and play" Internet access is provided in your dorm room. Internet service is part of the rent and WiFi routers are provided in each room. There will be a QR code on top of the router provided by your dorm. You will simply need to scan this QR code, set up an account, and you will be emailed log in information. However, an internet connection is needed to complete this process. This process can be accomplished by temporarily using a roommate's WiFi connection or if you have mobile service when you arrive on your mobile device. If needed, you may also use Internet cafés or an AYF phone or mobile hotspot to call family to confirm arrival. There is also a public hotspot at the Starbucks in the Freiburg train station and at other downtown locations where you can send messages free of charge.

The Academic Program

Program Learning Objectives

- Competence with the German language, and knowledge of German culture, history, and the arts
- Integration into the academic and social environment of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg and the Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg
- Immersion experience in a supportive environment
- Personal development and growth

Program Elements for Academic Year Students that Support these Objectives

- On-site staff to provide personal and academic advising
- Program office located in the center of Freiburg adjacent to the University campus
- Special courses taught by German faculty in area studies and history for program participants
- Participation in courses with German and international students offered at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität and Pädagogische Hochschule
- Coursework integrated into students' academic goals
- Volunteer and internship opportunities
- Cultural excursions to various sites in the region
- Housing with German and international peers

General Information about the University

Founded in 1457, Freiburg's distinguished Albert-Ludwigs-Universität (www.uni-freiburg.de) initially focused solely on the standard Renaissance disciplines of philosophy, law, medicine, and theology. Over the past two centuries, it has developed into a comprehensive institution of higher learning offering the full range of subjects that, in the U.S., constitute a liberal arts education. The university consistently receives a very high ranking in the annual survey of German institutions of higher learning conducted by *Focus* magazine and recently won recognition in a national "Excellence Initiative" competition. At present, 24,500 students are enrolled at the university. In addition, Freiburg is home to four other notable institutions of higher learning, a Musikhochschule (music conservatory) and a Pädagogische Hochschule (University of Education) as well as the Evangelische and Katholische Hochschule. All in all, Freiburg has about 31,000 students in its total population of 240,000.

Over the years, thousands of U.S. students have benefited from enrolling in Freiburg university classes alongside native German and international students in such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, art history, botany, business administration, classics, computer science, economics, European ethnology, forest management, geography, German, history, mathematics, music, philosophy, physics, political science, religion, sociology, and zoology. With a few exceptions such as English literature and some business, political science, natural science, and computer science courses, all classes are conducted in German.

As a participant on the Academic Year in Freiburg program, you have several options for courses:

AYF Program: Topics and intensive language courses are offered exclusively to AYF participants. These include intensive language courses utilizing texts and media on current events in Germany. The small class size and experienced instructors in these classes help students to improve their German language skills rapidly. Topics courses provide a broad survey of literary or historical periods. In the summer

semester, a course offered to AYF students participating in the Internship Program focuses on intercultural communication.

SLI Courses: The *Sprachlehrinstitut* (Language Teaching Institute) offers language and culture courses in the target language, generally at the intermediate level, at the University of Freiburg. In addition to German, more than 20 other languages are offered. SLI German courses are frequented by international students from around the globe.

PH Courses: The local **University of Education, Pädagogische Hochschule**, offers teacher training and academic training in a student's chosen field. AYF participants are often permitted to join PH courses, for example in the PH German Department, as guests. Many AYF students have found the PH a very worthwhile part of their studies in Freiburg.

University of Freiburg / Albert-Ludwigs-Universität (ALU): AYF students are full-time, non-degree seeking students at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. In their course selection, AYF students are not limited to a specific department or set of departments. With very few exceptions, all fields of study and all courses for which students are adequately prepared are open to AYF participants (closed-enrollment fields such as the Med School and Psychology are off limits, for example).

As an AYF student you put together a course of study in individual academic advising sessions with the Academic Director. Your personal course of study is designed to allow you to stretch and challenge yourself academically – while keeping it manageable at the same time.

The AYF Program Center

The AYF Program Center houses the offices of the program's Academic Director, Professor Helmut Puff, and the Program Director, Ulrich Struve. The Academic Director holds regular office hours. During the semester, the Program Center is open 10 AM – noon Monday through Friday, and 2-4 PM Monday through Thursday. During the orientation period and during the semester breaks, the Program Center may have different hours. AYF students have mailboxes at the Program Center and should drop by regularly to check their mail (incoming mail is not forwarded to dormitories). Although the program uses WhatsApp as a way of quickly communicating with all students, important program memos and announcements will continue to be distributed via these mailboxes as well as by email.

The Academic Director and Program Director are available to help you not just with academic concerns but with all aspects of daily life and cultural adjustment. Beyond teaching an AYF program course during the first semester in an area of their specialization, the Academic Director serves as your academic advisor throughout your year abroad and is ultimately the one who will approve or deny all your course selections during and after your individual advising conferences. At the end of the year, the Academic Director certifies the transfer of all your courses, credits, and grades to your home university. In addition, the Academic Director supervises locally hired program instructors, keeps in touch with university faculty members and administrators, and arranges tutorials for university courses with a substantial enrollment of AYF students.

Orientation

For AYF students, the academic year begins in early September with a six-week orientation program, including a 3½-week intensive language course.

During the first days after your arrival, AYF program staff will provide information and guide you through an array of bureaucratic formalities, such as opening a bank account, signing a dorm lease, applying for a residence permit, enrolling at the University of Freiburg, applying for mandatory medical insurance, and so on.

During the following weeks, you will attend an intensive German language course. The aim of this course is to improve your language skills and convey information about German culture and life in Freiburg.

The orientation program will also feature colloquia on life in the dorms, various practical aspects of everyday life, and getting around in Freiburg, as well as academic issues (e.g., the German university system, registration procedures, course offerings, libraries, and research facilities). In addition, each student will have an individual academic advising appointment with the Academic Director to select courses for the *Wintersemester*. Excursions to places of interest in the vicinity of Freiburg are a highlight of these first weeks in Germany and help to expand your horizons beyond the city of Freiburg. Overall, the orientation program aims to ease your integration into university life and the city.

Intensive Language Course

The classes you will attend in Freiburg during orientation are tailored exclusively to international students. Your placement in these classes is based upon the results of a written exam, in consultation with the Academic Director. During orientation, you will have three class hours (in two 90-minute sessions) daily, Monday through Friday. Grading is based on exams, homework, and classroom performance.

You will earn 3 credits for the intensive language course. Depending upon your level, the course will appear on your AYF transcript as AYF 301 or 401.

Courses and Credits

AYF students are required to maintain full-time student status for both semesters. The minimum full-time load is 12 credits per semester. For the *Wintersemester*, this minimum is in addition to the 3 credits for your orientation language course. Therefore, you will earn a minimum of 15 credits by the end of the first semester and a minimum of 27 credits by the end of the second semester.

Generally, AYF students earn a total of 27-30 credits during their year abroad. Credits for each of the regular semesters may include AYF program courses, university courses, courses at the university's Language Teaching Center (Sprachlehrinstitut, or SLI), courses at the Pädagogische Hochschule, and the AYF Internship.

The German Academic System

The university's *Wintersemester* runs from mid-October to mid-February and includes a two-week holiday break in late December and early January. The Pädagogische Hochschule and AYF follow the same semester dates which are noted in the table of Program Dates at the beginning of this Handbook. After an eight- to nine-week period for travel between the semesters, the *Sommersemester* begins in mid-April and ends in late July. During the *Sommersemester*, there is a one-week university break following *Pfingsten* (Pentecost). You are free to travel during the breaks. When planning your travels, please keep in mind that one of the *Wintersemester* AYF courses and the AYF German history course will most likely offer a five-day field trip to Berlin as part of its academic curriculum during the *Sommersemester*. During the semesters, you are expected to remain in Freiburg to carry out your

academic work and to participate in all program activities. You must notify the program staff of your travel plans during breaks and the long travel period between semesters. There is a form on the AYF home page (<https://www.ayf.uni-freiburg.de/students/explore/travel/>) to leave contact information in case someone needs to reach you.

While the courses offered by the AYF program itself are structured much like U.S. university courses, regular German university courses follow certain patterns that will be new to you. As you adjust to your new academic life in Freiburg, it will be essential to keep in mind the key differences between the German and U.S. academic systems that are sketched out in the following pages. During orientation, colloquia presented by AYF staff will describe in greater detail the German higher education system and how to make the most of it.

Interactions with Professors

In Germany, university professors are generally less available for providing individual student guidance than professors in the U.S. This is partly because of the high student/professor ratio in Germany (higher than the U.S. average), but also partly because German professors teach four courses per semester (more than the U.S. average) in addition to handling various other time-consuming administrative duties. Nonetheless, professors are generally very approachable and are usually willing to meet with you. Experience has shown that they are often especially open to foreign students. They do, however, usually limit appointments to at most fifteen minutes per individual student visit, and they typically see students on an appointment-only basis rather than accepting walk-ins.

You should try to make it a point to visit each of your professors during his/her office hours early in the semester to briefly introduce yourself as an AYF student and to describe your background and interests. You will probably want to visit some or all your professors a second time to discuss your particular course assignments, oral reports, or term papers as soon as they are set, in order to avoid stress at the end of the semester. This is especially important because quite a few German professors do not provide a printed syllabus and/or the sort of clear week-to-week assignments you are accustomed to in the U.S.

Traditional student-professor interactions in Germany have been shifting in the direction of the American approach over the past few years with the adoption of the bachelor's degree in Germany. But even so, figuring out what a Freiburg professor expects, but leaves unexpressed as a tacit assumption, will almost certainly require close attention and added initiative on your part. Unless you make it a point to seek it out, you may receive little or no feedback until final grades are posted.

Course Information

In mid-October, following the AYF orientation period, the regular *Wintersemester* begins. During the semester you will enroll in a combination of regular university courses and specially designed AYF program courses on German language, literature, and culture. The AYF program courses are taught by experienced local instructors and by the Academic Director. Like regular university courses, AYF program courses are conducted entirely in German. The Academic Director will teach one course during the winter semester.

AYF Language Courses during Orientation and the *Wintersemester*

All students are required to take the intensive language course taught in Freiburg during orientation. Students will be placed into a class that corresponds to their level of German based on a placement test. A second German course offered in Freiburg during the *Wintersemester* is also required for those AYF students who have not completed the language courses needed for the German major at their home

university. The Academic Director will determine whether a student must take this course. All students are encouraged to take the course to improve their language abilities. They should check with their home advisor to ascertain whether they can count the course as an elective credit for their German major.

The *Wintersemester* course in Freiburg is worth three (3) credits. It is offered at different levels and teaches the speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills appropriate for students at these levels, as assessed by Freiburg teaching staff at the end of the orientation course. The more advanced sections of the course aim to help prepare you for the term papers you will write in your university classes and therefore emphasize writing skills.

AYF Academic Director Course

Focus Freiburg: City, Culture, History

This course will canvas pivotal moments in European and German history since the Middle Ages by focusing on one urban community, Freiburg im Breisgau. Among the themes we will discuss are the city's origins, its cathedral, the emergence of universities, the fortified city and its aftermath, Freiburg in National Socialism, the aerial war during World War II, the city's post-war reconstruction, and commemoration of the past through public monuments. The readings for this class include informative articles and first-hand documents. In order to gain an understanding of the city as a layered social space, we will go on a series of site visits during class time.

AYF COURSES

The following AYF program courses are planned for 2025-2026:

- Intensive German Language Courses
- Political Science: Germany in the 21st Century
- AD Course: *Focus Freiburg: City, Culture, History* (see description above)
- German History: From Unification to Reunification and Today (1871-2020)
- Political Science: European Union / International Institutions
- AYF Internship (seminar on intercultural issues in the workplace)

Please note: These program courses are tentatively planned for 2025-2026. Typically, AYF offers an introduction to German contemporary politics in the *Wintersemester* along with the Academic Director's course on a changing subject and a course on the European Union and a German history survey course and in the *Sommersemester* (or vice versa). Depending on the size of the AYF cohort in a given year, courses may be added or reduced as needed.

ACADEMIC YEAR IN FREIBURG INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (AYF-IP)

The AYF program is proud to offer its participants the opportunity to work as interns during their second term in Freiburg (*Sommersemester*). AYF-IP provides participants with an opportunity to gain work experience, improve their German, and get to know German work culture firsthand. Internships are part-time and usually unpaid.

Participants will be expected to commit to 10-12 hours per week for 10-12 weeks. While an intern, you will continue to be enrolled in classes. The internship includes an academic component, a seminar (AYF 490 – Internship Program Seminar), for which you will earn a grade and 3 credits. In effect, the internship can replace one course during the summer term.

Previous interns have worked in an impressive array of organizations or host companies in and around Freiburg, ranging from government agencies to publishing houses, businesses, environmental organizations, and schools, among other institutions.

AYF will assist you in searching for an internship, but students interested in participating in the AYF-IP are not limited to placements suggested by the AYF roster of contacts. You are, on the contrary, encouraged to take the initiative and search for potential placements on your own. The host companies or organizations will determine specific tasks and responsibilities. German language skills as well as prior work experience play an important role in shaping the internship experience, as does a participant's personality, active engagement, and intercultural awareness. For some placements, it is important to apply quite early because slots may otherwise be filled with non-AYF applicants.

During orientation week in September, detailed information about this opportunity and the application and placement process will be made available. The AYF-IP is selective; about ten students can be accepted into the Internship Program. AYFers interested in the IP will be asked to submit an application by November 1, pay a program fee of 200 euros, and sign an agreement.

University Courses

AYF students have access to virtually all university and Pädagogische Hochschule (PH) courses offered in the humanities, social sciences, and certain natural sciences as well as most other disciplines. Not open are, for example, courses in the schools of medicine and pharmacy as well as the psychology department (though PH may offer some psychology options).

You should not count on a particular course being offered in any given semester, even if you know that AYF students have taken it in the past. Professors at German universities, especially in humanities and social sciences, tend to offer entirely new course topics. This is a pillar of the German understanding of "academic freedom," and you must therefore be prepared to be flexible in selecting your courses each semester.

If you have the requisite language skills, you may choose to take mostly regular university courses each semester. If you have less advanced skills, you may choose to take up to two AYF program courses per term. The AYF Academic Director will provide group and individual academic advising to guide you toward the combination of courses that is most appropriate for your needs and skills.

AYF strongly discourages students from enrolling in foreign language courses other than German for credit while in Freiburg. Students who want to continue a foreign language they started on their home campus will need written permission from their advisor at their home institution as well as permission from the Academic Director. No credit will be granted for beginning language courses (1st or 2nd semester courses).

Students who wish to complete coursework in mathematics, finance/business, or the natural sciences in Freiburg are cautioned that required courses on the home campus may not be available in Freiburg and that advanced coursework may be difficult due to differing prerequisites and language problems. Close consultation with appropriate advisors prior to departure is highly recommended.

The Timetable/Schedule of Courses (*Vorlesungsverzeichnis*)

Most university courses at the University of Freiburg, as at all German universities, are not repeated year after year but instead are offered only once. As a result, there is no direct counterpart to the standard U.S. college catalog, with its convenient listing of all regularly offered courses.

The *Vorlesungsverzeichnisse* for the university and Pädagogische Hochschule are published several months before each semester begins, so you will have ample time to look them over. They are available in an online database format.

A *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* is a comprehensive but also somewhat daunting key to making course selections. Therefore, AYF students will also be provided with a list of courses at the university and Pädagogische Hochschule recommended by the Academic Director.

Kommentare

In most cases, the *Vorlesungsverzeichnisse* contain *Kommentare*. They are especially helpful because they go beyond merely listing course titles to providing course descriptions, preliminary reading lists, course requirements and so on. Occasionally, information on courses is posted on departmental homepages. Increasingly, all available information is integrated into the central online database version of the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*. This database is updated continuously and is the most readily accessible source of course information. You can access it from the main university page (<http://www.uni-freiburg.de/>) by hovering over the tab for "Studium" in the menu at the top and then clicking on the option "Vorlesungsverzeichnis".

In some cases, information on a given course may be incomplete in the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*. The room assignment, for example, may be missing, or the instructor may be designated as "N.N." (i.e., *nomen nominandum*), which means that a professor has not yet been appointed at the time the entry was added to the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* database. Also, courses are subject to last-minute cancellations based on the same factors that could arise in the U.S. such as unexpectedly low enrollments or the illness of a particular instructor. When planning your semester schedule, you should therefore always have a back-up plan with appropriate alternatives in case one or more courses are cancelled.

Updated course listings are (generally) incorporated swiftly into the online *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*. It pays to check back right before the semester starts to make sure you do not get blindsided by last-minute changes.

Departments

A *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* is traditionally organized by *Fakultäten*, which are roughly comparable to the Divisions, Schools, or Colleges at U.S. universities (for example, the College of Letters & Science at UW-Madison).

Pre-enrollment (*Voranmeldung*) is required for certain courses and in specific departments at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität due to enrollment caps and for capacity planning purposes. If pre-enrollment is required for a particular course, general information about such a policy appears in the online *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*; an entry generally lists the number of maximum participants and the number of expected participants. There are different procedures in place in different departments to enroll in a course. In some departments, a special contact person handles the pre-enrollment for a specific type of course and in a few departments it suffices to just show up on the first day of class, but increasingly registration procedures are integrated into the university's online course listing and processed

electronically. You will receive detailed information about the relevant procedures during orientation and AYF staff will assist you with the registration, as needed.

In the case of strict “*numerus clausus*” (“closed enrollment”) disciplines, the AYF program cannot guarantee that you will be allowed to enroll in all or even most courses. *Numerus clausus* fields include most natural sciences (especially those with lab sections). To enroll in *numerus clausus* courses, you must receive the consent of the instructor in advance, and the best approach is to visit the instructor well before the semester begins during his/her office hours. These times are generally posted on the instructor’s office door, and you may also inquire by telephone, by email, or in person with departmental secretaries. The names, office addresses, and telephone numbers of all university faculty and staff members (including departmental secretaries) appear in the *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*, the university telephone directory, and/or on the homepages of the individual departments. These can be accessed online <https://uni-freiburg.de/> – then select from the menu at the top: Universität -> Studium -> Vorlesungsverzeichnis (in the second column).

Tips on Deciphering a Vorlesungsverzeichnis

Course listings in the Freiburg *Vorlesungsverzeichnisse* are traditionally organized first by department and secondly, within a given department, by level. With the move online, however, these course listings function much more like a database; guides on using them efficiently are available online at www.ayf.uni-freiburg.de/ayf/guides. See the section titled “How-to-Guides for Course Catalogs”. Usage strategies will also be discussed during orientation. Unlike most college courses in the U.S., which may be categorized as elementary, intermediate, or advanced, German university courses are divided into a greater number of different categories, some of which pertain to type, some to the level.

The hierarchy of German university courses, from most elementary to most advanced, is roughly as follows (there is some variation among different disciplines):

<i>Vorlesung</i>	This is a lecture course (the German term for a single lecture held outside a classroom setting is <i>Vortrag</i>). Lecture courses are typically offered only by distinguished senior professors, who usually read aloud (<i>vorlesen</i>) a draft essay or book manuscript to a large audience. Students generally have little or no opportunity for discussion or questions. To get a <i>benoteter Schein</i> for a <i>Vorlesung</i> , you may need to arrange with the professor to write a paper or take a final exam, because the German students in the course may not be taking it for a grade. However, it is becoming much more common these days for professors to give grades based upon final exams (<i>Klausuren</i>) connected to a <i>Vorlesung</i> .
<i>Einführungs or Grundkurs</i>	This is an introductory course in which a department acquaints students with the methods, topics, and history of its discipline. In the German department, several parallel sections are typically offered and reading and writing assignments vary from section to section. Note: An <i>Einführung</i> is not identical with a typical “survey course” in the U.S. and usually has a narrower focus.
<i>Übung</i>	This is a small class devoted to individual or group student assignments, either oral or written. In some cases, an <i>Übung</i> is offered in conjunction with a <i>Vorlesung</i> . In this sense, it is similar to a discussion section at a U.S. university. Participation in <i>Übungen</i> is recommended only when a <i>Schein</i> is offered, such as in the German department. A separate agreement with the

	instructor and the Academic Director may be necessary for a student to receive a grade and credit for an <i>Übung</i> .
<i>Proseminar</i>	This is the starting level of independent academic study, comparable to an advanced undergraduate course in the U.S. Students (anywhere from 15 to 50 in a class) are generally required to give an oral report (<i>mündliches Referat</i>) and write a term paper (<i>schriftliche Hausarbeit</i>).
<i>Seminar or Hauptseminar</i>	This is one level higher than a <i>Proseminar</i> , comparable to an American graduate seminar. Only a student who is very proficient in German and already has considerable knowledge of the subject matter should enroll in a <i>Hauptseminar</i> . Often, professors require that participants in a <i>Hauptseminar</i> have already passed the <i>Zwischenprüfung</i> or have equivalent qualifications, e.g., an American B.A.
<i>Kolloquium or Forschungs-kolloquium</i>	This is usually a top-level course that prepares participants for an upcoming comprehensive examination for an advanced degree.

REGISTRATION

The sort of central registration procedure you are familiar with from U.S. universities has gained traction in Germany in recent years and add/drop deadlines are known as well; pass/fail however is rare. As study abroad students who are not enrolled in a specific degree program you are subject to different registration procedures. AYF staff will explain them in detail during orientation and assist you with course registration.

Importantly, the AYF program operates like U.S. universities by establishing add/drop deadlines each semester. Once the AYF drop deadline has come and gone, you are formally registered for the courses that appear on your schedule sheet, just as you would be at your home university in the U.S.

For planning your coursework each semester, the Academic Director will meet with you and offer as much guidance as possible. But you must accept major responsibility for drawing up a realistic preliminary plan for your coursework. You should not, for example, expect the Academic Director to be completely versed with the course requirements of your major at your home university. You have to know these requirements. Prior to your individual academic advising session with the Academic Director just before the beginning of each semester, you should prepare a sort of “highly tentative schedule” and bring it along to your appointment. Concretely, this means that you should pre-select as many as ten courses that you find potentially interesting. With the advice of the Academic Director, you will then draw up a preliminary semester schedule. In the following weeks, you may change your registration by adding or dropping courses up to the respective deadlines. To add a course later, however, you will need to have participated from the beginning; otherwise, you are likely to have missed too much material covered in the course and would run into difficulties obtaining a grade. Following the final registration deadline, the AYF Program Center will prepare a printout of your final course schedule and give you an opportunity to check its accuracy.

A typical final schedule comprises 12–15 credit hours, and you must seek the Academic Director’s permission to register for fewer or more. This total includes AYF program courses and university courses, as well as courses from the university’s Language Teaching Center (*Sprachlehrinstitut*, or SLI) and the Pädagogische Hochschule. To maintain full-time student status, you must be enrolled for a minimum of 12 credit hours.

Credits

Credit hours for university courses are based on the number of hours per week that an equivalent course in the U.S. would grant. The great majority of university courses meet just two hours per week, but they generally count for 3 credits. Number of credits varies according to type of course (see descriptions of all courses above in Tips on Deciphering a *Vorlesungsverzeichnis*):

- **Vorlesungen:** 2 credits. A student may receive a third credit for a *Vorlesung* if s/he takes an AYF tutorial offered in conjunction with the *Vorlesung*. In this case, the tutorial grade will constitute half of the overall course grade. Occasionally, faculty members permit the submission of additional written work (e.g., an essay or a formal Hausarbeit) to supplement a lecture course. In such cases, students may earn 3 credits for a lecture course. Students should discuss these options with the Academic Director.
- **Einführungskurse:** 3 credits (see note under Proseminare)
- **Proseminare:** 3 credits

Note: *Einführungskurse* and *Proseminare* may be taken in conjunction with a *Tutorat*. Students will not receive additional credit for work done in an AYF *Tutorat*. The grade from an AYF *Tutorat* will constitute 1/3 (one third) of the overall course grade. 4 credits can be earned in a course with a *Pflichtttutorat* mandated by the respective university department.

- **Übungen:** 3 credits. Participation in *Übungen* is recommended only when a *Schein* is offered, as not all *Übungen* courses offer one. A separate agreement with the instructor and the Academic Director may be necessary for a student to receive a grade and credit for an *Übung*.

AYF Credits vs. ECTS Credits

At the university and PH you will encounter another credit system called ECTS. In this system, professors give European Credit Transfer System points. ECTS points are only loosely comparable to U.S. credits (a 2:1 ratio of ECTS points to AYF credits generally works as a rule of thumb). Most importantly, however, ECTS points are ultimately irrelevant to you. The only credit number that is important for AYF participants is the number of credits approved by AYF and by the Academic Director for a particular course.

One key aspect of ECTS is that it enables professors to offer variable credit for the same course based on different types of work performed by a student. This can be quite confusing. Please beware of *only* giving an oral presentation in a course, for example, because a faculty member says they will issue a *Schein* on that basis – and expecting to receive 3 AYF credits for the course. Most likely, the faculty member who just explained to you that they will give you a *Schein* for an oral presentation intends to give you a certificate of participation (*Teilnahmeschein*). As an AYF participant, you need to receive a regular graded certificate (*benoteter Schein*); a *Teilnahmeschein* is not sufficient for getting AYF credit for academic work done in Freiburg. It is only sufficient for an audit that carries zero credits. And even if a faculty member were to provide a graded *Schein* based on an oral presentation alone, this does not meet AYF minimum requirements for certifying 3 credits on the AYF transcript.

Requirements, Explicit and Implicit Expectations

Requirements and expectations are not always spelled out as clearly as they usually would be in a U.S. seminar or course. It is possible, for example, that a Freiburg faculty member will issue a *benoteter Schein* to you for doing two of the three things mentioned in the previous section, e.g., *Referat* plus *Klausur* or *Referat* plus *Hausarbeit* or *Referat* plus *final oral exam*. That is a pedagogical decision on the part of the faculty member, and AYF will accept a *Schein* obtained on that basis – provided it is a *benoteter Schein*.

As a rule of thumb and if not otherwise specified, it is expected that you produce a minimum of 8-10 pages of written work (plus cover page, TOC, bibliography) to receive 3 AYF credits. Often, German faculty members can be very generous when working with international students. On the other hand, German faculty can be very strict regarding attendance and assignments. There will be differences from one professor to the next, but in general you are not permitted to have more than 2 missed classes per semester and you may need a doctor's note to explain an absence. It can happen that a faculty member refuses to accept a paper from a student who missed more than 2 class sessions, thereby failing the student. Some faculty members regard *all* assignments as mandatory rather than optional components leading toward a cumulative grade. It is possible to do very well in most assignments and still fail a course for not having completed one key requirement. You will always need a doctor's note if you miss a final exam and are asking for a make-up appointment.

These notes are intended to provide you with an initial orientation about grades and credit. The AYF staff will be more than happy to help you with questions that you might have. In your own interest, you will be asked to submit all *Hausarbeiten* and other written work produced for AYF, university and PH courses to the AYF office.

Tutorials

A *Tutorat* (the Freiburg term for a tutorial) is similar to a TA-taught discussion section for a large class at a U.S. university. Some Freiburg university departments (such as history, German, art history) organize obligatory or elective *Tutorate*. Like discussion sections conducted by teaching assistants in the U.S., *Tutorate* provide an opportunity to review material already covered and to prepare for upcoming class meetings. Tutors (*Tutoren*) also help with the German language, library research strategies, and the correct form of written assignments; a *Tutorat* aims to acquaint you with the fundamental tools of a particular academic field. *Tutorate* often require brief written or oral reports by students. You will not receive credit for attending a university-organized *Tutorat* unless it is a *Pflichtttutorat* (required for passing the course) and places substantial demands on participants, as is the case in history department *Proseminare*. Speak with the Academic Director about the possibility of receiving credit for academically demanding *Pflichtttutorate* in other departments.

The AYF program also organizes its own *Tutorate* for university courses if five or more students registered for the course indicate a strong interest in attending a *Tutorat*. Your work in an AYF *Tutorat* will count for one-third of your course grade if it accompanies a *Proseminar* and one-half of the grade if it accompanies a *Vorlesung*.

COURSES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The Sprachlehrinstitut (SLI) is a special institute at the university that offers a range of foreign language and culture courses for international students, among them courses in German as a Foreign Language. These courses focus on different aspects of language acquisition - speaking, listening, writing, grammar, and culture. Some of the courses are designed to prepare international students for the formal language exam (DSH) required for admission to the university. The DSH exam is waived for AYF students.

AYF students may register for no more than 3 SLI courses per semester. The AYF Program does not arrange *Tutorate* for SLI courses. The credit system for SLI courses differs somewhat from the one described above for regular university courses:

- **Übungen in pronunciation and intonation carry no credit.**
- **Übungen in other areas of language acquisition carry 1 credit.**
- **Landeskunde / Culture courses carry 2 credits.**

Courses at the Pädagogische Hochschule (PH)

AYF students are welcome to enroll in PH courses – as guests. Therefore, access depends on faculty members' approval and space availability. Seminars at the PH, especially those covering an academic area of study (as distinct from didactics courses which are also offered), can be a very good fit for AYF students.

The following outlines the AYF policy on courses at the PH: AYF students may enroll at the PH for no more than 9 AYF credits during the academic year and for no more than 6 credits in either semester. Courses taken at the PH must be approved by the Academic Director. On the basis of descriptions and reading lists, the Academic Director will determine whether PH course content and workload seem suitable for AYF students. Generally, courses in the German Department at the PH will be considered appropriate. Education majors may be exempted from the policy with approval of the Academic Director. Home university adviser approval may also be needed for education majors.

LIMITS AND LOAD

AYF students are required to maintain full-time student status for both semesters. The minimum full-time load is 12 credits per semester. For Wintersemester, this minimum is in addition to the 3 credits for your orientation language course. Therefore, you will earn a minimum of 15 credits by the end of the first semester and a minimum of 27 credits by the end of the second semester.

Generally, AYF students earn a total of 27-30 credits during their year abroad. Credits for each of the regular semesters may include AYF program courses, university courses, courses at the university's Language Teaching Center (Sprachlehrinstitut, or SLI), courses at the Pädagogische Hochschule, and the AYF Internship.

Grades and Grade Conversions

German universities generally do not issue either transcripts or semester grade reports, though the practice is increasingly taking hold, particularly in the sciences and in some humanities departments as well. Traditionally, the work you do in each course is recorded on an individual attendance and grade certificate (a so-called *Schein*), which is signed by the instructor and stamped (*gestempelt*) by the instructor's department. Some instructors helpfully collect the *Scheine* of all their students and take them to be stamped, but in other cases you will have to take your signed *Schein* to the department's *Sekretariat* or *Geschäftszimmer* yourself to get it stamped. Generally, it is possible to have these grade certificates mailed to the AYF office upon completion of grading.

While German students collect their academic grade records (individual *Scheine* or grade records) throughout their university years, AYF students will deliver their *Scheine* and other academic grade records to the Program Center, which in turn will use them to prepare official AYF transcripts. After the transcripts for the *Sommersemester* are completed, the AYF Program Center will send your collected

Scheine and other academic grade records to your permanent home address. Should you decide to attend a German university in the future (for example to get a master's degree), you may be asked to present them as part of the application process, so be sure to keep your collected Freiburg records in a safe place.

The AYF program does not grant any course credit at all for an ungraded *Teilnahmeschein*. A *Teilnahmeschein* is only sufficient for a course taken as an "audit" with zero credit. **You must receive a graded certificate (benoteter Schein) for each university course for which you register and expect to receive credit, even if you only take it on a pass/fail basis.** Receiving only an ungraded *Teilnahmeschein* or not receiving any *Schein* at all in a course, other than a course taken as an "audit," is equivalent to receiving a failing grade.

If you are enrolled in a *Tutorat* that is integrated into a regular university course, your grade will be entirely based on the *benoteter Schein* for the course itself. You do not need a *Schein* for an AYF *Tutorat*. The AYF *Tutor* will provide a grade list to the AYF Program Center, and as described above, your work in an AYF *Tutorat* will count for one-third of your *Proseminar* grade or one-half of your *Vorlesung* grade.

You must receive a grade in each regular university course you enroll in for credit. It is important to keep in mind that receiving a grade is not always the standard operating procedure at German universities, although it has become more common in recent years. German students may still take coursework on an ungraded or pass/fail basis. German students don't always receive a *Schein* for attending a *Vorlesung* in the humanities. If you plan to take a *Vorlesung* for credit, you may have to make individual arrangements with the professor to obtain a *benoteter Schein*.

You will be happy to hear that virtually all Freiburg university instructors are not only quite familiar with the need of U.S. students to receive a course grade but are sensitive to your situation as a newcomer to the German university system. In order to give you a grade, they may choose to give you an oral or a written exam or agree to assign and grade a term paper.

Establishing American equivalents for the German grading system is somewhat challenging. In principle, the following grade translation scale is applied to those courses that AYF students take at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, the Pädagogische Hochschule, and those arranged directly by AYF including the intensive language courses:

German number with + and -	German number with decimals	German descriptive grade	U Mich	MSU	Iowa	UW
1, 1-, 1 – 2, 2+	1,0 – 1,75	sehr gut, mit sehr gutem Erfolg	A	4.0	A	A
2	1,76 – 2,0	gut, mit gutem Erfolg	A-	3.5	A-	AB
2-	2,01 – 2,25	–	B+	3.5	B+	AB
2 – 3, 3+	2,26 – 2,5	noch gut	B	3.0	B	B
3	2,51 – 3,0	befriedigend, mit Erfolg	B-	2.5	B-	B
3-	3,01 – 3,25	–	C+	2.5	C+	BC
3 – 4, 4+	3,26 – 3,75	noch befriedigend	C	2.0	C	C
4	3,76 – 4,0	ausreichend	C-	1.5	C-	C
4-	4,01 – 4,25	–	D+	1.5	D+	C
4 – 5, 5+	4,26 – 4,75	noch ausreichend	D	1.0	D	D
5	4,76 – 5,0	ungenügend, mangelhaft	D-	1.0	D-	D
5-, 6	5,01 – 6,0	–	E	0	F	F
<i>Ungraded Teilnahmeschein, or not receiving any Schein</i>			E	0	F	F

Students whose home universities are not listed above should check with their university to be sure they understand how AYF grades will be applied to their transcript upon completion of the program.

Though some professors do not take attendance, most do, and class participation does have an influence on course grades. Regular and active participation is also increasingly deemed a requirement for obtaining any *Schein* at all, and Professors may refuse to give you a *Schein* if your attendance has been irregular. **Generally, you will need to be more self-motivated and should expect to receive less regular feedback from professors than you are accustomed to in the U.S.** Thus, you may have to make some adjustments in your study habits to be successful.

Academic Dishonesty

The most important rule about academic dishonesty and plagiarism is: “Don’t do it!” The academic code of conduct that applies at your home university also applies in Freiburg, and plagiarism is just as serious a violation during your year abroad as it is at home.

But what constitutes plagiarism? Plagiarism is if you present the ideas of others as your own ideas, be it in writing or during an oral presentation. Plagiarism also extends to presenting your own work from one course as original work in another course. In other words, you may not submit the same paper (or any part thereof) in different classes.

The key to avoiding plagiarism, therefore, is to consistently identify your sources. Whether you are using printed books, articles, online resources, lecture materials, etc., your sources of information must be cited. Direct quotations should be set off by “the appropriate marks.” If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to identify and document your sources, do not hesitate to approach the AYF staff.

Here are some online resources to help you clarify your questions:

- <https://www.cse.msu.edu/~alexliu/plagiarism.pdf>
- <https://guides.lib.umich.edu/academicintegrity>
- <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook>

However, it is *not* plagiarism if you write a paper in German and ask a friend to help you correct grammar mistakes. It is *not* plagiarism to adopt idiomatically or stylistically more appropriate formulations from your friend. It may be plagiarism, however, if your helpful friend rewrites a paper for you, even if you did not request it, and it is obviously plagiarism if you supply a friend with an outline and he or she writes the paper for you.

If you are suspected to have violated rules of academic honesty, the AYF directors are bound to pursue the matter. The directors will gather all relevant information and invite you to respond to the allegation of academic misconduct. If the findings confirm that you have plagiarized, you will be penalized. Penalties will be closely coordinated with your home campus. Should a suspected infraction come to our attention after your departure from Freiburg, it will be necessary to refer the matter to the appropriate office on your home campus.

End-of-Semester Deadlines

- Copies of all term papers, essay, or other written work (including written work for AYF & SLI courses) must be turned in to the AYF Program Center no later than 14 days after the end of classes each semester. Please submit your written work in electronic form (Word.doc, Word.docx, PDF, RTF, or Open Office documents are accepted). If the course does not require a Hausarbeit or other written work, you must submit a signed exam report form (“Klausurbericht”) to the AYF Program Center no later than 14 days after the end of the semester. Any late submissions of written work or exam reports require approval in writing by the Academic Director. With approval from the Academic Director and assuming that you are not in violation of the course policies for the course for which you are requesting an extension, you will carry a “PG” notation (grade is still possible) on your transcript. If AYF does not have a copy of your written work on file, “NIA” (no information available) or “PG” (grade is still possible) will be recorded on your transcript. “NIA” and “PG” notations will automatically turn into a failing grade (“F” or “E”) by July 1 for the Wintersemester and November 15 for the Sommersemester.
- Roughly three months after the end of the semester (i.e., July 1 for the Wintersemester and November 15 for the Sommersemester), you must have completed all coursework (including approved late work and/or make-up exams, “Nachklausuren”). If you previously obtained an extension in writing from the Academic Director and completed and submitted all written work for the course by the deadline, your “PG” notation will be transformed into a “GNYP” (grade not yet posted) if AYF has not yet received the grade from the instructor. If you do not meet this deadline, you will automatically receive a failing grade (“F” or “E”) at your home institution without further warning.

Living Abroad

Germany

Considering the limited area it occupies – only 138,000 square miles, about 15 percent smaller than Wisconsin, Michigan, and Iowa taken together – Germany is a remarkably diverse country. Its topography ranges from the coastal lowlands on the North and Baltic Seas, where Low German is still spoken, to Alpine heights in the south. Germany lies in the heart of Europe and acts as a bridge between the east and west. With its 83 million citizens, Germany is the most populous European nation. Germany has a number of unique features that the government has to consider when making political decisions – for example, it is bordered by nine countries (compared to the two neighbors of the U.S.).

It is also important to learn about Germany's past to gain a deeper insight into the country and its people. You may wonder, for example, why so many of the major streets in Freiburg – such as the “main drag,” the Kaiser-Joseph-Straße – are named after Austrian (rather than German) royalty. In fact, Freiburg and the entire surrounding region of the Breisgau were Austrian territory until 1803. And why does one of the university dorm complexes have a French name? The Studentendorf Vauban was originally built as housing for French NATO troops. Indeed, Freiburg was occupied by France not just following World War II, but also from 1677–1699, and again from 1744–1748. The NATO garrison was named after Sébastien de Vauban, an engineer who in the 17th century redesigned the entire city of Freiburg as a giant French fort. Running through the university just one block north of the AYF Program Center is Rempartstraße, which marks the original ramparts laid out by Vauban.

Germany and Your Identity Abroad

The more you learn about German political and cultural history and its continuing impact on everyday life today, the more rewarding your stay abroad will be. Like every other country, Germany is in some ways a contested space. People you encounter may express very different views and values in their daily interactions in Freiburg as well. On the one hand, Freiburg hosts one of the larger Pride Parades for Christopher Street Day and has a very lively LGBTQI+ scene; on the other hand, homophobic incidents are not unheard of. On the one hand, a large Black Lives Matter rally took place in Freiburg in the summer of 2020; on the other hand, racially insensitive comments or racist incidents have been reported by local people of color and AYF students. A few years ago, a crowd of Freiburgians several thousand strong prevented a neo-Nazi march through town by completely blocking off the main train station, keeping the would-be marchers inside until they gave up and departed. And yet, anti-foreigner and antisemitic sentiments are evidently key aspects driving recent election successes of the right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD) founded just ten years ago.

As you prepare to go abroad, try to learn more about Germany and about Freiburg with your social identities in mind. Consider your social identities and the groups you are a part of. How might the way you understand your own identity, and the way that others perceive it, change in Freiburg? Different parts of our identity become more salient or more pronounced in our minds depending on the identities of those around us. Study abroad, then, can present a huge challenge. It can also provide the opportunity to learn and grow in our knowledge of ourselves. We encourage you to think about the parts that make up your identity (e.g., Asian American, biracial, Jewish, first-generation college student, non-binary, etc.). Some aspects of your identity may be more easily observed by others (e.g., gender expression, skin color, age, etc.) while other parts are less observable (e.g., gender identity, citizenship,

health/wellbeing, sexual orientation, etc.). Two students who hold the same identity may end up having very different experiences.

If you notice one of your fellow participants experiencing discrimination or reactions from locals that you feel are inappropriate, reach out to them, and see what you can do to support them. We hope you'll also talk to the AYF staff for additional support as needed.

Freiburg Location and History

Freiburg is located in the Upper Rhine Valley at the foot of the Black Forest in southwestern Germany, and its residents enjoy the sunniest and warmest climate in the entire country. They are proud that their commitment to environmental protection has led to Freiburg being declared an “*Öko-Hauptstadt*.” The city is internationally regarded as a center of “green” politics. Auto traffic is banned in the historic inner-city section, which is entirely given over to pedestrians and streetcars. Bicycles are allowed in some parts of the inner city.

During World War II, the city suffered extensive damage from Allied air raids. Through careful effort, much of the town has been rebuilt in a way that restored the scenic medieval character Freiburg has possessed since it was founded in 1120. As in the Middle Ages, Freiburg’s distinctive *Bächle* (small streams diverted from the Dreisam River) still course alongside all streets in the historic city center.

With roughly 240,000 inhabitants, Freiburg is home to a variety of cultural activities including concerts, exhibitions, and theater. The musical scene ranges from classical to jazz and rock. The city is only 40 miles from the Swiss border and 14 miles from the French border, and it offers convenient access to Basel and Strasbourg. On the outskirts of Freiburg, you enter the Black Forest, one of Germany’s most famous and picturesque regions. The combination of valleys, pastures, forests, and mountains has made the area a prime vacation spot since the very invention of tourism. In the Black Forest, you will find many recreational opportunities, including biking, hiking, and skiing – both downhill and cross-country.

Freiburg became an official “sister city” (*Partnerstadt*) of Madison, Wisconsin, in 1985, and you are welcome to participate in the monthly meetings of the Freiburg-Madison-Gesellschaft at the Greifenegg-Schlössle (www.freiburg-madison.de).

For more information on the city, you may want to look at the following websites:

www.freiburg.de

www.fudder.de

www.bergwelt-schauinsland.de

www.virtuelles-freiburg.de

www.badische-zeitung.de

Housing

The AYF program arranges housing, which is in university dormitories located a short streetcar, bus, or bike ride from the campus. **Dormitory rooms will be assigned based on the information you provide on the Housing Preference Form. There is no guarantee, however, that you will receive your preferred assignment. Should your choices be oversubscribed, a lottery will be used to determine assignments.**

In past years, students living in the university dormitories have indicated that they made many friends through extracurricular activities, such as music groups and sports, so be sure to bring along your musical instrument, sports equipment, etc. If you begin right away to take advantage of every opportunity to speak German, your language skills will improve rapidly – and you'll enjoy everything much more, and much more quickly.

Each dorm resident occupies a single room (11–12.5 square meters, approximately 120–140 square feet) with basic furnishings (desk, desk chair, desk lamp, closet, bed, mattress, and bookshelf). Bedding, towels, and a washcloth can be pre-ordered by checking a box on the AYF Registration Form and will be in your room on Arrival Day. You are strongly encouraged to use this service to ensure that you have bedding available upon arrival (bringing a sleeping bag is, of course, another option for the short term).

All dorm units are co-ed. Depending on the configuration of the building, bathroom and kitchen facilities are shared by as few as three and as many as sixteen residents. All dorm units have showers.

In most dorm units, 30–40% of the residents are international (i.e., non-German) students. This is higher than the overall percentage of international students enrolled in the university (12%). Many international students are in Freiburg for only a year or two and find it more challenging than continuing students to find housing on the private rental market.

The dorms are subsidized by the government, and rents are therefore substantially lower than for comparable units on the private market. Rent prices, which range from €290 to €475, are based on two factors: room dimensions and the date of construction or renovation. Internet access is included as part of the rental contract for all units. The age of the building and its most recent renovation as well as the layout of the floors correlate directly with the rental cost as well as the flashiness factor (or lack thereof) that you can expect. In other words, you get what you pay for.

Please be aware that you will be signing a room lease with the *Studierendenwerk* (Freiburg dorm administration) for an entire year. Your lease will run from September 1, 2025, to August 31, 2026. Consequently, you are liable for twelve full months of rent.

You are not allowed to sublet or share your dorm room at any time during the program, and you do not have the option of moving out of the dorms and into private (rental) housing. Moving out of the assigned dorm room is only possible under exceptional circumstances. Once you are in Freiburg, please do not hesitate to contact the Academic Director or Program Director to discuss any problems with your housing situation.

If you wish to leave Freiburg soon after the summer semester ends in July, AYF can arrange on your behalf to sublet your room to a student enrolled in the university's International Summer Language Course held in August. In late May or early June 2026, you will receive a letter from SWFR, the *Studierendenwerk*, asking whether you intend to keep your room through August or would prefer to sublet it. There will be an AYF group meeting at that time to explain the subletting procedures to you.

The first rent payment is scheduled to be withdrawn toward the end of September. In addition, a €25 processing fee and the €75 cost of the bedding starter pack are charged by the *Studierendenwerk* when you move in. In addition to paying rent, dorm residents are required to make a €400 security deposit (€500 if you opt for an efficiency apartment). The security deposit is due at the end of September as well and will be collected in a withdrawal from your Volksbank account. This will be followed a few days later by the withdrawal of your rent payment for the month of October. In other words, there will be several withdrawals within about two weeks totaling anywhere from €1080 to €1,540 for expenses related to your dorm room rental. Please keep this in mind when planning how and when to transfer funds into your Volksbank Freiburg account. When you move out, your security deposit will be returned to you, minus possible deductions for damages.

When you move in, you should immediately check the contents and condition of your room against the inventory list you will find on your desk. If there are any discrepancies or damages not listed, report them at once to the *Hausmeister* responsible for your dorm or an AYF Staff member. If you do not report missing furniture or other types of damage, you may be held responsible for them when you vacate the room, and charges may be deducted from your security deposit. Be sure to save the inventory list until you move out; there is a fine for losing it.

If you lock yourself out of your room, you should contact your *Hausmeister* during his office hours. (You will receive information on your *Hausmeister's* – rather limited – office hours after your arrival in Freiburg.) At other times, you can call an emergency service to be let in. The charge for the emergency service is €50. There is no lock-out service after midnight. If you should lose or damage your room key, and a cylinder lock has to be replaced, the charge can be substantial (up to approximately €100 to €120). For a lost or damaged key without a lock change, the charge is approximately €30 to €50. In any case, it is wise to have room numbers and phone numbers of other AYF students or of your newly minted German friends at your disposal if you do lock yourself out of your room on a weekend or in the middle of the night.

All dorms are wired for Internet access, and plug-and-play Internet service is included in your rent. Freiburg dorms are served by the provider MyWire (www.my-wire.de). Internet access is available as a “plug-and-play” service; WiFi routers are provided in the dorm rooms. A connection link can be found using a QR code on the router. When in doubt about how to connect your device, ask your WG mates for help. The connection speed is generally sufficient for video calls. Eduroam can also be reached in some dorms, but do not rely solely on this.

A summary of housing options is provided as an addendum to this handbook. You can take a virtual tour of the dorms as part of the more detailed PowerPoint presentation introducing AYF and the various housing options made available through your home university. In each case, please note that the ground floor (*Erdgeschoss*) equals 0 in German parlance while it is called 1st floor in U.S. usage, the German floor 1 is the 2nd floor in the U.S., etc.

The Studierendenwerk and some of the individual dorms have websites as well.

- Studierendenwerk: www.swfr.de
- Studentensiedlung: www.studentensiedlung.de

- Studentendorf Vauban: <https://stadtteil-vauban.de/en/quartier-vauban-2/> (about events and resources in Vauban, albeit not specifically about Studentendorf Vauban)

Student Life

Apart from the many performance possibilities at the Musikhochschule, the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität has some twelve student orchestras and bands and twelve student choral groups; all in all, there are some 50 musical groups, as well as student theater groups. Auditions for these are held at the beginning of each semester. Contact information is available through the *Studium Generale*, which also organizes a wide range of lectures, workshops, and mini courses: www.studiumgenerale.uni-freiburg.de

If you are a musician but do not wish to bring your own instrument for the year, you will be able to rent more common instruments at a reasonable rate (a trumpet for about €20 per month, for example). Other instruments such as a French horn with a double register may not be available for rent at all since they are just too expensive to insure. Many students have told us that it's most definitely worth it to bring your instrument.

AYF students may also participate in a broad range of intramural men's and women's sports activities (*Allgemeiner Hochschulsport*) jointly organized each semester by the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität and Pädagogische Hochschule. These include acrobatics, aerobic dancing, basketball, boxing, canoeing, cycling, fencing, field hockey, ultimate Frisbee, gymnastics, handball, horseback riding, ice hockey, martial arts, mountain climbing, ping-pong, rugby, soccer, softball, sailing, skiing, swimming, tennis, trampoline, triathlon training, volleyball, etc. Participation in some of these sports requires payment of an additional fee. A listing of all the activities is available online at www.hochschulsport.uni-freiburg.de

The entry fees for municipal indoor swimming pools are very modest, particularly for students. The Westbad is located near the Studentensiedlung, and the Faulerbad is just around the corner from the AYF Program Center. In addition, Freiburg has numerous sports clubs devoted to track and field, soccer, bicycle racing, lacrosse, roller derby, and so on. The city is also home to an American football team (<https://ft1844-freiburg.de/sportarten/american-football>), a baseball (www.freiburg-knights.de), and a softball team (the Freiburg Warthogs can be found on Facebook), and an ice hockey team (www.vikings-freiburg.de) that are eager to recruit new players.

SHOPPING

Because of a strong tradition of German labor laws written to prevent abuse of workers, German stores have rather limited hours in comparison with those in the U.S. But opening hours are slowly changing in Germany.

Generally, stores in Baden-Württemberg close by 8 p.m. on workdays (Monday through Saturday). Outside the city center or in smaller towns, many stores close even earlier, typically at 6 p.m. on weekdays and at 1 or 2 p.m. on Saturdays. However, some grocery stores now stay open until 10 p.m. or even until midnight (Mo-Sat).

Some local and small shops even close during the lunch hour for one to two hours. Except for restaurants and a few pharmacies, bakeries, and flower shops, all businesses are closed on Sunday. Gas stations are open late in the evenings and during weekends, however, and larger ones are open 24/7 and carry a wide assortment of groceries and snacks. Predictably, the prices there are higher than in regular grocery stores. There is a grocery store in the basement of the Freiburg Hauptbahnhof where

you can buy items from 5 a.m. to midnight each day, 7 days a week. A drugstore on the train station's main level is also open 7 days a week.

When shopping for groceries, it is advisable to follow the German practice of taking along your own shopping bag, since practically all stores charge for bags. At grocery stores, you are often expected to weigh fruit and vegetables yourself and always expected to bag your own groceries at the checkout. You will receive information on grocery stores near the dorms during orientation.

Eating Out

The *Mensa* (university cafeteria) located on campus offers inexpensive and substantial meals throughout the week except on Sundays. To pay for the meals, you can use the UniCard which can be loaded with cash at the Mensa or with your bankcard at the University Library. You can choose between *Schneller Teller* (a dish that can be served on a single plate or in a bowl, e.g., Ravioli), *Tagesgericht* (consisting of one main component and 2 – 3 sides), *Menü* (main course with soup and dessert), *Salatplatte* (a large plate you can fill yourself at the salad bar), snacks, and French fries. A (small) food-court style section has been added recently. It boasts, among others, a serving station where food is freshly prepared in a wok and an organic food line. Visit the Studierendenwerk homepage at <https://www.swfr.de/> and click on the link "Essen & Trinken."

Restaurants in the downtown area range from relatively inexpensive to frankly overpriced. In Germany, restaurants often post their menus outside, next to the front door, so it's easy to check out prices before you enter.

MEETING GERMANS

Getting out into the German community will require a concerted effort on your part. This is particularly pronounced during the first few weeks and months, when so much of your time is spent with other AYF program participants. Also, when you arrive in September, the German students will still be on break and, like in the U.S., many of them return home during this time and don't come back to Freiburg until the start of the semester. Still, there are many opportunities available, and the effort pays off.

To begin with, talk to your roommates! They can be your best source of daily conversational German practice, in addition to personal connections within the city. The AYF orientation tutors and mentors are also wonderful contacts to have and ask questions in the beginning of your time in Freiburg.

Participating in a tandem partner program (where you are paired up with a German student who wants to improve their English) is another way to meet someone who understands your situation and can help you improve your German. The AYF staff will offer tandem opportunities or you can look for a tandem partner by setting up a profile via the PH website or the Studierendenwerk website. These tandem databases are not connected; you can use both to double your chances of finding an interested tandem partner. And there is also a Facebook group called "SWFR Tandem" where you can easily share a post that you are looking for a tandem partner.

PH: <https://www.ph-freiburg.de/sprachenzentrum/projekte/tandembuero.html>

In university classes, sign up for a *Referat* group with Germans. Working with other Americans may be comfortable but working with native speakers will not only help your presentation, it is also a great way to make new friends. Once classes at the university begin, so do intramural sports and other activities, including the international student club excursions, which is another good way to get out into a new

realm of student life. Information about the club is online on the *Studierendenwerk* website; see “Veranstaltungen” in the menu at the top of www.swfr.de.

Transportation

Public Transportation

Like most German cities, Freiburg has an excellent system of streetcars and buses. For the month of September, the AYF program will purchase a *RegioKarte* on your behalf, which allows you to use all public transportation, including local trains, not just in Freiburg but in the surrounding region.

After September, you can purchase a semester ticket valid from October to March (April to September for the second semester) for a very modest €96 or a Student Germany Ticket for €35,75 per month. After 7pm, students (with a valid Uni ID) can use public transportation within Freiburg for free. You will receive additional information about the public transportation system upon arrival.

BICYCLES

Traveling by bike is quick and easy and is often the most practical means of transportation. Keep in mind though, that bicycles sometimes need repairs and are also prone to theft. Used bikes (*Gebrauchträder*) are best bought from other students (see notices hung on bulletin boards, the classifieds, or the AYF flea market). There are also used bike stores in Freiburg, and some will actually make an agreement with you to buy your bike back at a set price when you leave. You should check the bikes' condition carefully before buying. With some luck, you may be able to bargain down the price a bit. Make sure that you get a receipt and a *Fahrradpass* for any bike you buy. This bike pass is proof that the bike was not stolen. If you do not have a bike pass, you may have problems when you try to sell your bike at the end of the year. Bike helmets are highly recommended, but they are quite expensive in Germany, so if you plan to bike, bring your helmet from home.

It is German law that all bikes have working dynamo- or battery-powered front and back lights. Also, bicyclists are held responsible for obeying the same traffic laws as motorists. You can be ticketed for running red lights, not stopping at stop signs, going the wrong way on one-way streets, riding without lights at night, etc., or taken to court in case of an accident. Get acquainted with German traffic laws before riding your bike on public streets. Right-of-way and passing, for example, are handled differently than in the U.S.! See this website to learn more about traffic rules in Germany: www.adfc.de.

Trains

For national train transportation, any student under 27 years of age can buy a *BahnCard*, which entitles you to a 25% or 50% discount on all regular fares, depending on the type of *BahnCard* you purchase. The *BahnCard* is normally valid for one year and is automatically renewed for a second year unless cancelled on time. However, Deutsche Bahn has recently been experimenting with different models such as a three-month subscription called Probe BahnCard. Whether this particular offer or others will be available to you in September 2025 is not entirely clear. You may want to visit the Internet homepage of the Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) for up-to-date BahnCard pricing and subscription models, conditions, routes, times, connections, and special offers at www.bahn.de. Generally, a *BahnCard* pays for itself quickly and is a good investment; many former AYF participants have noted that a *BahnCard 50* worked out quite well for them. Both *BahnCards* can be combined with other reduced prices (*Sparpreise*). If you are the kind of person who likes to finalize plans early (which will give you the broadest selection of *Sparpreistickets*), then you might be better off with the *BahnCard 25* in combination with *Sparpreise* since the reduction on a *Sparpreis* offered for *BahnCard 50* holders is also 25%. In either case, you can start saving with it right after your arrival in Germany. It is easiest to

purchase the *BahnCard* directly in the DB Navigator App and download an online version on your smart phone. As with all online purchases from the DB, however, it is important to bring an official form of ID on board the train as well (i.e., your passport or, later, residence permit). Even without a *BahnCard*, it is highly recommended that you install the *DB Navigator* app on your phone. With this app you can purchase tickets, make reservations, check yourself in electronically on a given train instead of having to wait for a controller, among other functions. If you plan on train travel, it is well worth familiarizing yourself with the *DB Navigator*.

Begin exploring your transportation options well before you leave for Germany. A Eurail pass is not necessarily the cheapest mode of transportation, but it may be the most convenient and suitable for your plans. Remember that you cannot buy a Eurail pass in Freiburg. Instead, Eurail passes are available in the U.S. and at certain major German train stations, such as Frankfurt. Travel must be initiated within six months of purchase.

Other transportation options include InterRail, the equivalent of Eurail for German students. The rules for eligibility require that students have been resident in Germany for six months, so for you this will become an option in March, in time for the semester break. The AYF Program Director will be able to provide you with official proof of residency required to purchase an InterRail pass.

In general, an InterRail ticket works just like the Eurail Pass. However, much like the RegioKarte or Germany Ticket, it is very important to pay attention to what type of train you are boarding. To give just a few examples, in France and Italy there are trains that require reservations, regardless of what class you are sitting in. Riding on night trains and high-speed trains will also require a reservation as well as an extra charge. The InterRail Ticket also provides a discount for certain ferries, such as between Greece and Italy (assuming both countries are included in the Pass you have purchased).

However, by watching closely the specials offered by the Deutsche Bahn and combining a *Sparpreis* with a *BahnCard*, it is possible to find fabulous deals as well riding an ICE train from Freiburg to Hamburg or Berlin for less than €15, for instance. The trick is to plan ahead and book very early (six to eight weeks in advance).

RIDE SHARING

You can also look into *Mitfahrgelegenheit*, ridesharing. This is quite inexpensive, and it is generally reliable when booked through a ride-sharing agency. A number of websites like blablacar.de provide listings – just do a search for “Mitfahrgelegenheit”. How safe it is depends on the skill and experience of the driver offering the ride – and no one can give any guarantees.

LONG-DISTANCE BUS SERVICE

For many decades, the Deutsche Bahn enjoyed a legally guaranteed, virtual monopoly on long-distance passenger travel. Wherever DB offered service, no-one was granted a license to operate a long-distance bus line. This is now changing. Several companies have started offering long-distance bus service. Especially when booked early, prices can be very competitive. A one-way ticket from Freiburg to Munich can be had for €15, if booked well in advance. For more information, see: [FlixBus](#) or specialized search engines such as www.busliniensuche.de.

EUROPEAN BUDGET AIRLINES

Several budget airlines offer affordable flights through many European destinations. For more distant destinations, a flight can be a meaningful option as well. There are meta-search engines for air travel,

but some of the cheaper airlines do not participate in these searches such as Ryan Air which operates out of Baden-Baden, north of Freiburg. Possible starting places for locating cheap flights are: www.kayak.de, www.billiger-fliegen.de, www.billigfluege.de, <https://www.airline-direct.de/>, or www.expedia.de/p/billigfluege. Among the most relevant company websites are www.ryanair.com/de, www.eurowings.com, and www.easyjet.com/de. Google Flights is a great service for finding and comparing flights. As always, make sure to read the fine print to avoid surprise surcharges.

Safety While Traveling

You are strongly discouraged from traveling to areas both in the country and in the surrounding areas that the U.S. State Department has designated as hazardous or for which it has issued an advisory against traveling there. Make sure to check the U.S. State Department website for Travel Advisories and Consular Information Sheets for any country you are considering traveling to before making any travel plans (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>). Or, if you do not have access to the Internet, check with the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest you. Major notices will be forwarded by AYF program and/or study abroad office staff. In addition, make sure to leave your travel itinerary with the AYF Program Center and with your family or a friend in the U.S. in case someone needs to contact you in an emergency as well as for your own protection. You can submit your information online through the travel form on the AYF homepage: www.ayf.uni-freiburg.de/students/explore/travel/

ILLEGAL DRUGS

Existing legislation in most foreign countries, including Germany, regarding the use or possession of marijuana, cocaine, and other illegal drugs imposes very severe penalties. Neither the U.S. Embassy nor the AYF Program Center is able to exercise effective pressure to moderate these penalties. Association with illegal drug users or possessors is considered the same as personal use or possession by authorities in some countries. Students are responsible for obeying all laws dealing with the use or possession of illegal drugs, and liability rests entirely with each student. The program reserves the power to require a student to withdraw without refund if there is any evidence of drug use by that student.

Insurance

Medical Insurance

By German law, all students are required to carry German health insurance while they are enrolled as regular students at a German university. AYF students are required to enroll in *Techniker Krankenkasse* (TK) starting October 2025. Your home university will take out a US insurance policy on your behalf that provides coverage for the program duration (GeoBlue – U of Michigan, International SOS – MSU; or CISI – U of Iowa, UW-Madison and anyone joining AYF via the UW). These respective insurances are your primary coverage for the month of September. Information will be provided during orientation, but students should contact their study abroad office for important additional insurance information.

TK is a so-called *gesetzliche Krankenkasse*, a statutory health insurance, because it is for people who are required by German law to have this type of insurance. Most of the necessary steps will have been taken care of by the time you arrive, and you will have full TK coverage as of October 1, 2025. Payment for TK coverage will be arranged by AYF staff on your behalf.

The TK medical insurance policy covers all doctor office visits, hospital care, prescriptions, x-rays, and dental care. Eyeglasses (lenses and frames), bi-yearly dental cleanings, and birth control are generally not covered (birth control is covered, however, under the age of 21 and later when it is medically

indicated). Dental crown work and prescriptions involve co-payment which may be waived or reduced by the insurance upon application depending on personal financial need. Whenever you see a dentist, be sure to ask whether all or only part of the bill will be paid by your insurance before authorizing treatment. Co-pays are required for hospital stays (€10 per day for up to 28 days maximum per year, an amount that may be reduced for students) and for transportation by ambulance (€10 per medical transport). After your arrival in Freiburg, you will receive a TK insurance card (*Versichertenkarte*) to present at the doctor's office any time you have an appointment. You will receive more detailed information about TK coverage during orientation.

Your TK medical insurance policy is valid in all European Union countries, but not in Eastern European countries nor in the United States. For travels to countries that are not covered by your TK medical insurance policy, you can call on the U.S. health insurance policies offered through your home universities.

You will therefore generally have at least two different health insurance policies as an AYF participant: one for the whole program taken out on your behalf by your home university and a second, German one for the remainder of the academic year. If you intend to travel to Germany prior to September 1, you may wish to obtain a separate short-term travel medical insurance for your trip or inquire about options to extend the insurance offered by your home university for additional contiguous travel days.

Information on Freiburg doctors, including feedback and recommendations from past AYFers, is available at the AYF Program Center. The AYF staff will also assist you if you want to find a doctor or make an appointment.

It should be noted as well that it is not permitted to import medication to Germany from outside the European Union. Some food supplements are classified as medication by customs officers. Accordingly, customs will destroy packages found to contain medications or return them to the sender which makes shipping medications by mail an illegal and unreliable option. **If you are managing a chronic illness or any other situation that requires regular use of medication, it would be highly advisable to bring at least three months' worth of medication with you in person (if at all possible, with a formal doctor's note on letterhead that the medication is for your use and no one else; naturally, you would be well advised to adhere to this doctor's order and not share medication with another person to whom it has not been prescribed).** This will give you enough time to establish a working relationship with a Freiburg physician and obtain German prescriptions. Most medications – including for mental health conditions and gender-affirming care – will be available on the German market. In the end, your medication costs could very well be lower than in the U.S. due to the generous TK coverage, but you will need some time to set it all up to your satisfaction. **Please do not hesitate to contact the AYF Program Director in advance for assistance in researching the availability of specific medications in Germany, and to discuss any related questions.**

LIABILITY INSURANCE

AYF students are required to carry personal liability insurance. All necessary arrangements for enrollment in a group policy will have been made prior to your arrival in Germany. This insurance will save you substantial expenses if you should cause an accident, damage another person's property inadvertently, etc. In the past, students who did not have liability insurance and were involved in accidents that resulted in personal injury or property damage had to cover all the costs out of their own pocket. Please note: Items that you borrow from someone else, regardless of whether the lender is a private person or a business, are not covered by personal liability insurance.

Computers

You would be well advised to bring along a laptop computer, if possible. This will make writing papers easier and the Internet more accessible. For those without laptops, there is free access to e-mail and the Internet at the AYF Program Center and through computer labs at both the university library and the university computing center (*Rechenzentrum*), where you can also print documents.

If you intend to bring your own computer, make sure that it can run on 230V/50Hz. Almost all newer laptops will be able to meet the power requirement. Nonetheless, so-called “step-down transformers” may be a good investment as well. For appliances up to 500 watts, such transformers run around €25 and regulate the voltage down from 220/240 to 110/120. In the past, AYF students’ laptops have failed on occasion because the converters built into the laptops were not able to handle power spikes as efficiently as a transformer. Basically, using a transformer offers an added level of protection.

Printers are very sensitive when used with a converter. If you bring a printer from home, make sure it has an integrated converter. Past AYF participants have suggested that students should pool their resources in groups of three or four, buy one printer in Freiburg, and share it. (Last year’s students will offer items for sale in an informal flea market. During the summer, AYF staff will contact you via e-mail with specific information about the flea market.) However, you are quite welcome to use the AYF Program Center printer for a small fee per page. When it comes to software, Microsoft Word is used widely, and Open Office is also commonly used, though Macs are popular on campus.

It is highly advisable to carry your laptop along with you on the plane (in your carry-on luggage) when coming to Freiburg. PCs shipped from the U.S have often been held up by German customs authorities, who have then required students to pay a stiff customs duty to “import” the equipment, particularly if it is brand new equipment. Moreover, equipment shipped by mail has sometimes arrived in damaged condition. (See “Packages” below.)

As part of the enrollment process at Universität Freiburg, you will be assigned a user ID and a password for the university server, with which you can log on at the university computer labs. This Freiburg user ID and password will be very important for course registration in some departments and for accessing course assignments posted online. In general, German university facilities have less generous opening hours than U.S. counterparts.. Internet cafés and hotspots are available almost everywhere. During orientation, you will be provided with information on accessing the university’s wireless network, which operates as a highly secure virtual private network (VPN), as well as the AYF office’s wireless network. If you would like to get a head start on preparing your laptop for use in the Uni Freiburg network, which is a very good idea and recommended by former AYFers, you will find instructions online at <https://wiki.uni-freiburg.de/rz/doku.php?id=vpn>. Eduroam access is also available at the Uni Freiburg, so you may be able to use Internet resources via Eduroam with your home university login (for more see <https://wiki.uni-freiburg.de/rz/doku.php?id=wlan-eduroam>).

Communication

INTERNET ACCESS

All dorms are wired for Internet access, and plug-and-play Internet service is included in your rent. Freiburg dorms are served by the provider MyWire (www.my-wire.de). Internet access is available as a “plug-and-play” service; WiFi routers are provided in the dorm rooms. A connection link can be found

on the router. When in doubt about how to connect your device, ask your WG mates for help. The connection speed is generally sufficient for video calls.

Telephone

To call Freiburg from the U.S., first dial 011 (the international code). Then dial 49, which is the code for Germany, and then 761, the code for Freiburg.

To telephone the U.S. from Germany, first dial 00 (the international code). Then dial 1, which is the code for the U.S. Then dial the area code and the regular number.

Using internet-based messaging services like WhatsApp, Facetime, Signal, and Facebook Messenger are advisable and used by most students and parents at no additional cost to either party with a standard internet connection.

Like the U.S., Germany uses daylight savings time in the spring and summer, but the dates on which clocks are adjusted differ – daylight savings time begins one week earlier and ends two weeks later. Except for these three weeks, Freiburg's time is 7 hours later than the Central Standard Time zone and 6 hours later than EST. At 5 p.m. in Iowa or Wisconsin and at 6 p.m. in Michigan, it is midnight in Germany. Make sure your friends and family are aware of the time difference, so they call at reasonable hours.

CELLULAR PHONES

AYF participants are required to adhere to the following policy on cell phones: first, to ensure easy communication and accessibility in case of an emergency, all AYF participants are required to have a cell phone at their disposal at all times during their study abroad experience. AYF participants are most welcome to bring a cell phone from the U.S. and keep their U.S. cell phone number for the year; alternately, participants may purchase a cell phone in Germany during their first week in Freiburg. Participants must keep the AYF Program Center staff informed of their cell phone number and any subsequent changes of their number.

AYF participants wishing to maintain and use their U.S. number are required to inform the AYF program prior to arrival of their number since this number will be used to set up online-banking for their German bank account initially.

AYF participants wishing to purchase a cell phone in Germany with a German phone number are required to purchase a so-called "pre-paid" cell phone or sign a contract with a monthly cancellation option. They are not permitted, in other words, to purchase cell phones with 2-year contracts; while standard in Germany, 2-year contracts are not suitable for one year of study abroad. Nowadays, there are very reasonable pre-paid options or plans with a monthly cancellation policy available at very moderate cost. These pre-paid options also offer E-sims for newer phones that do not have a slot for physical SIM cards.

German students generally use WhatsApp or similar apps to communicate which is cost neutral when used via WiFi. We will also set up an AYF WhatsApp group to connect you with staff and local alumni prior to your arrival to answer questions and will use it throughout the year to share announcements. Given the tremendous popularity among your future German classmates and the utility in communicating program matters, you may consider installing WhatsApp prior to arrival.

Letters

Airmail between the U.S. and Germany generally takes 7-10 days, while surface mail takes four to six weeks. German postal regulations forbid the mailing of cash in letters. It is recommended that checks be sent via registered airmail.

Packages

You may wish to have all packages from the U.S. sent to you c/o the AYF Program Center mailing address which is through the central Freiburg University mail drop (*Poststelle*). The advantage is that such packages can be delivered during regular office hours, Monday through Friday. If the German postal service attempts to deliver a package to you at your dorm room and you are not home, you will receive a notice directing you to pick up your package at the post office, which may be less conveniently located than the AYF Program Center or the *Uni Poststelle*. The administration at the dorms does not accept packages on behalf of students.

If you opt to receive your packages at the AYF Program Center, please use the following mailing address and always include your name and the tag "AYF" or "Academic Year in Freiburg". This may seem obvious, but occasionally parcels have arrived at the AYF office without a student's name. And if parcels are sent without AYF mentioned in the address, the carrier may not be permitted to deliver it to our address, especially if a package contains some kind of merchandise. For mailings sent through courier services such as DHL, FedEx, UPS you will need to use an address that includes a street name and house number. This may also occasionally be required by online merchants! Please note the differing ZIP codes and addresses for mailings sent via U.S. Mail and by courier service.

<u>Mailing Address (for regular U.S. Mail):</u> [Your Name] Academic Year in Freiburg Albert-Ludwigs-Universität D-79085 Freiburg Germany	<u>Mailing Address (for courier services):</u> [Your Name] Academic Year in Freiburg Albert-Ludwigs-Universität - Poststelle Platz der Universität 3 D-79098 Freiburg / Germany
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Customs

Please read the following information about customs regulations and charges carefully and share it with your family and friends. Paying close attention to this information can potentially save you a significant amount of money and needless hassle.

There is a fee for all packages that enter Germany from a non-EU country in addition to possible customs charges. This means that regardless of the value of the package, there is a minimum "Auslagepauschale" of €6 for each package that you receive from the U.S., in addition to other charges based on the value of the package. Unless it is a package that is valuable and needs to be insured, you may want to recommend to your parents to "underestimate" the value of items, especially if they are sending you already used items! For more information, visit the FAQs page of the Deutsche Post: <https://www.deutschepost.de/de/b/briefe-ins-ausland/haeufige-fragen.html> Some other mail servicers such as GLS charge even higher fees for their customs processing.

Parcels mailed from the U.S. to Germany require a customs declaration form, and what gets written on this form often has serious consequences for the terms and conditions of delivery in Germany. The

customs declaration form needs to list the contents, the dollar value of the contents, and whether the contents are a gift or merchandise. It is highly advisable always to declare some low-balled dollar value (think resale value through the Goodwill or flea market prices); packages without any declared value often get flagged by customs and need to be collected in person on the opposite side of town.

In recent years, we have noticed that package that only hold personal items, even when they only *used* personal items such as winter clothes, or packages that have been declared a gift, were subject to a German import tax of 13.5% in almost all cases. In some cases, this struck us as not entirely logical, but it has to do with the fact that it is near impossible to prove to customs authorities that such “imported” personal effects will, indeed, be exported again at the end of the year – and the compliance costs for tracking such personal mailings are just prohibitive. For packages shipped by a merchant, import taxes will have to be paid in any case.

The only sure-fire way to prevent having to pay customs seems to be packing everything up and paying for an extra suitcase to bring with you on the plane. But that may not always be practical and, therefore, in some instances you will probably just have to pay the customs or import duty invoice.

Once you have received a notice from customs, it is important to have invoices and/or a letter from the sender to present to the customs office. Even if you are the sender, include such a letter with the shipment itself as a routine matter. The following sample letter can be readily adapted for specific shipments. It is perfectly fine to write such a letter to customs in English.

<i>Sample Letter</i>	<i>A "filled in" Sample Letter</i>
<i>Sender's full name and address</i>	<i>Jane Doe Main Street 11 Big Town, CA 95404 USA</i>
<i>Addressee's full name and address</i>	<i>Robbie Doe c/o Academic Year in Freiburg Albert-Ludwigs-Universität D-79085 Freiburg Germany</i>
<i>Date</i>	<i>20-Nov-25</i>
<i>Re: Customs assessment for this package</i>	<i>Re: Customs assessment for this package</i>
<i>Dear Madam or Sir:</i>	<i>Dear Madam or Sir:</i>
<i>This is to certify that I am sending the following items to my son/daughter/friend <addressee's name>:</i>	<i>This is to certify that I am sending the following items to my son Robbie:</i>
<i><include short packing list></i>	<i>* cookies (gift) * CD (gift) * winter coat – used * hiking boots – used * dictionary</i>
<i>These items are</i>	<i>These items are</i>

<p><i>* gifts for the exclusive personal use of my son/daughter/friend <name> and the total value of gifts is \$ <dollar; best not to list more than 60 per mailing; with new items you need to be accurate since receipts will need to be presented>; and/or</i></p> <p><i>* items needed for his/her daily use</i></p> <p><i>* used clothing and the total value is \$ <dollar; go low in your estimate, thing flea market or Goodwill></i></p>	<p><i>* gifts for the exclusive personal use of my son Robbie, and the total value of gifts is \$ 16; and</i></p> <p><i>* items needed for his/her daily use), in the value of \$ 20</i></p> <p><i>* my son's used clothing items, value of \$ 20</i></p>
<p><i>Sincerely yours,</i></p> <p><i><signature of sender></i></p>	<p><i>Sincerely yours,</i></p> <p><i>Jane Doe</i></p>

A word of advice about insuring packages sent by regular mail: whether you are mailing from the U.S. or from Germany, you would be well advised to insure a package if it contains a very valuable item (a camera, for example), especially if you name it on the customs declaration. The labels are read by many eyes along the way. For packages that do not contain anything particularly valuable, it is best to avoid using insurance or, if desired, to take out relatively low insurance. Customs officers, too, will use the "insured amount" listed on the customs declaration form as one benchmark for making a customs assessment.

Packages sent by express mail service or by courier, such as FedEx, UPS or DHL, are in a separate category regarding customs. These carriers are obliged to clear customs before delivering packages to the recipient. Consequently, these mailings arrive in Freiburg with some delay (up to two weeks) and the carrier has often already advanced the customs charges. You will be required to repay any customs charges immediately upon delivery plus the carrier's fees. FedEx, for example, charges €13 for each package where customs had been advanced.

This is not cheap by any means, but UPS has been known to charge an astonishing €32 in fees in addition to customs charges. We recommend, therefore, not using UPS for any shipment that might generate a customs charge (especially electronics). **You should also know that German customs regulations stipulate that the cost of transportation (the mailing or shipping cost) is deemed part of the cost basis used to calculate customs or import taxes. A more expensive express shipment will therefore generate a higher customs charge than a package with the same content sent by regular U.S. mail.** For all such courier and delivery services it holds true that there is no possibility of negotiating a customs waiver.

When ordering goods through the Internet, you should be aware that if you have things sent directly from a company outside the European Union, these goods are "merchandise" and therefore subject to customs. And even though the product information on the web may state that your desired book or CD is available within two days, it will not reach Freiburg that quickly. Delays are the rule rather than the exception.

Preparing to Leave Freiburg

During the *Sommersemester*, AYF will hold a group meeting at which all the steps you need to carry out to prepare for departure will be explained. All necessary forms will be filled out jointly during that meeting.

The AYF Program Center will take care of the following things on your behalf:

- Working together with the Studierendenwerk to sublet your dorm room for August;
- Terminating your enrollment at the university;
- Closing out your medical and liability insurance policy;
- Notifying the local police authorities of your departure, as required by law.

In addition, you will be responsible for the following:

- **Completing all coursework before leaving Freiburg or by August 7, 2026**, whichever comes earlier; any extensions beyond this date must be approved in writing by the Academic Director before you leave Freiburg. With approval from the Academic Director and assuming that you are not in violation of the course policies for the course for which you are requesting an extension, you will carry a “PG” notation (grade is still possible) on your transcript. If AYF does not have a copy of your written work on file, “NIA” (no information available) or “PG” (grade is still possible) will be recorded on your transcript. Please note that “NIA” and “PG” notations will automatically turn into a failing grade (“F” or “E”) by July 1 for the Wintersemester and November 15 for the Sommersemester.
- Turning in all term papers, essay, or other written work (including written work for AYF & SLI courses) to the AYF Program Center no later than 14 days after the end of *Sommersemester* classes. Please submit your written work in electronic form (Word.doc, Word.docx, PDF, RTF, or Open Office documents are accepted). If the course does not require a *Hausarbeit* or other written work, you must submit a signed exam report form (“Klausurbericht”) to the AYF Program Center no later than 14 days after the end of *Sommersemester* classes. See the handbook section on End-of-Semester Deadlines for more details.
- Collecting all your course *Scheine* from your university instructors, making sure they are signed and stamped, and turning them in at the AYF Program Center;
- In case your instructor has not yet graded your work, asking him/her to send your *Schein* to the AYF Program Center via *Hauspost* (campus mail, free of charge);
- Returning all checked-out books to the university library, then getting your *Antrag auf Exmatrikulation* stamped at the library information desk, and turning the form in to the AYF Program Center;
- At least two weeks prior to your departure, making an appointment with the *Hausmeister* at your dorm to do a check-out inventory (*Zimmerabnahme*) of your room (please note: check out is not possible on Saturdays or Sundays).
- Closing your Freiburg bank account or, if necessary, making arrangements for closing your bank account and transferring any balance to your U.S. account after bills have been settled.

***The AYF staff wishes you a successful
study abroad year and a safe journey home!***

Student Testimonials

The testimonials below are from past participants; they reflect various students' experiences and are included to provide different perspectives. IAP does not endorse any specific view expressed in this section.

Preparations Before Leaving

- Make sure that you have enough Euros on you to pay for a taxi. By the time you arrive in Freiburg you'll probably be so exhausted that you will happily pay to sink into the seats of a taxi instead of figuring out the streetcar system and having to carry your suitcases for another block. No matter how light you pack – by the time you get to Freiburg, you'll wish you had packed lighter. Most taxis now do take cards.
- Use power converters - not *just* adapters! Adapters won't necessarily change the electric current, and your stuff may get fried. It's probably easier to find adapters and converters in the U.S. than in Germany.
- Don't leave sports equipment (hiking/climbing things, softball/baseball gloves, tennis rackets, etc.) at home thinking you won't find the time or the people to do it with! When your new German best friend wants to go climbing with you, it can be expensive to ship your equipment over.
- A bathrobe might be nice in some dorms – it's not a big necessity, but when it's cold in the winter, it's not so bad to run from the shower to your room when you have a comfy robe.
- Although one German grammar book is helpful, there are a variety of basic language books available at any of the bookstores and AYF Office, so bringing all of your past textbooks is unnecessary.
- Pack light! Don't bring more than you can carry yourself, particularly when you are traveling alone. Keep in mind that you will not only be dragging your luggage along flat sidewalks, but also up and down stairs and escalators, and heaving it onto trains.
- If you use a face wash with the active ingredient benzyl peroxide to keep your skin clear – such as Neutrogena Clear Pore Cleanser/Mask or something like it – bring a supply with you! I could never find it in Germany, not even in a pharmacy. And international shipping can get pretty expensive quickly.
- If you have a lot of electronics that you want to bring with you, bring an American surge protector or power strip. THEN when you arrive, buy a high-capacity converter that you plug your American power strip into and then you have plenty of American outlets. It's cheaper and nicer than having to deal with a million tiny converters.
- It's a good idea to back up your information from your computer before you go / bring an external HD. You never know what could happen to your computer while you are over here.
- You can't always find your favorite deodorant/soap/shampoo here. I recommend bringing a few extra just to start off with until you find something that you like here.

- It is possible to suspend your American cell phone contract for a set number of months while you're abroad. You can do this instead of canceling it so that you don't lose your number, nor do you have to pay for a full contract that you're not going to use. Call your cell phone company. They do it for military personnel going abroad, too. Or you can "park" your number using services like NumberBarn. That way you do not lose your number, and you can still receive texts to your American number and be notified via app.
- When you call your banks to tell them that you are going abroad and approve out-of-country transactions, give your parents the authority to access your banking accounts on your behalf. It's much easier to e-mail your parents and have them call your bank for you if necessary, instead of you paying a lot / e-mailing / trying to call your bank.
- Have a clear idea of what credits you hope to accomplish (especially for majors besides German) before you come here, as it makes the course equivalency process easier. Talk to your advisors before you leave.
- Think about your next year's living arrangements before you leave. It can be hard to negotiate / deal with leases abroad.

Travel and Arrival Information

- Don't go home during breaks! Instead, buy a rail pass and go everywhere, even if it's on your own.
- Freiburg has tons of things to see and do. Make sure you plan to spend a great deal of time in Freiburg.
- Be sure to check out Vienna.
- Buy a BahnCard (discounted train pass) as soon as possible – it may seem like a lot of money, but it will save you a lot of money, especially if you can start getting the discounts right away. If you're flying into Frankfurt, get it at the train station even before your train ride to Freiburg – that way it starts paying for itself on your very first day!
- Hamburg was one of the coolest places I went, and I would recommend it alongside Berlin and Munich. Also, Oktoberfest was overrated. If you go, spend the night.
- Before you buy a Eurail pass, check out the various other options in Germany and the countries you want to visit; for instance, an InterRail pass can be bought in Europe and is much cheaper.
- I would strongly advise anyone purchasing an InterRail Pass to read carefully the "fine print" as to what the ticket does and does not cover. In my own personal experience, ticket checkers (especially on night trains) tried to charge me an additional 10, 15, or even 20 Euro while citing vague reasons or regulations on which they refused to elaborate. I paid one of these "fees" once, and after that I would fold my arms and simply refuse to open my wallet until someone explained – either in English or German – specifically what the charges were for. At the same time, it is important not to be paranoid that every ticket checker is out to rob you; they may not have encountered an InterRail Ticket before, or may simply be misinformed about the details themselves.

- Check out Orbitz, Travelocity, and Google Flights for intercontinental flights and RyanAir, EasyJet, fly.de, and many other websites for cheaper flights within Europe.
- BahnCard 50 is well worth it if you choose to travel. Even if you are traveling outside of Germany, it gives you the option to get to the Frankfurt Airport 50% cheaper, as flights out of there tend to be less expensive and more abundant.

Academic Program

- Professors are more than willing to meet with students after class or during office hours, so take advantage of this time! Discuss what is expected by the professor and by AYF and what you want to achieve by taking the class. Do this as soon as possible! The longer you wait, the more daunting your term papers will seem.
- Get started on your Hausarbeiten (final papers) as soon as possible! You do not have too much other schoolwork to do during the semester, so treat parts of each Hausarbeit as assignments throughout the semester. You will be so much happier during the semester break if you're already done with your papers. (Although if you go home for winter break, it may be helpful to do some research at home.)
- Don't be afraid to take SLI and AYF courses. I learned a lot from them and sometimes enjoyed them more.

Living Abroad in Freiburg

- There's a 24-hour vending machine that has pretty much everything a convenience store would have near the Händelstraße dorm. If you're hungry at 3 a.m. and short on food, it's just a short walk to Automaten-Emma.
- Climb to the top of the Schauinsland, Schönberg, and Schlossberg mountains and enjoy the amazing views. If you're in Freiburg for New Year's Eve, spend it on Schlossberg – you'll be able to see the fireworks all over the city.
- Take advantage of the Schwarzwald being your backyard – go hiking or rent one of the mountain huts and spend a night or weekend there with your newfound German, American, and international friends – it's a great way to get to know everyone.
- Get a bike (from the AYF flea market, city flea markets, or bike shops in the area)! It's a lot of fun to ride around town and in the hills around Freiburg – even all the way to France – and although the public transportation is great, it's nice to be able to get around its schedule.
- Watch German TV – American shows dubbed into German *and* actual German shows. It'll help your comprehension a lot, and you'll be even more in tune with the popular culture.
- Posters around town display many concert opportunities, as well as special events at clubs and discos. One of my favorite musicians came to the area, and I only knew about it because I happened to look at a poster on a door on some side street. Keep your eyes open.
- Some recommended restaurants: Brennessel has a low-priced and copious spaghetti special in the late afternoon and early evening; Euphrat has great falafel or kebap sandwiches; Mekong has fast,

hot, and cheap Chinese food; Firenze has the cheapest pizza; Laubfrosch has a better quality pizza that is not cheap but worth it; Martinsbräu offers tasty but rather pricey German food; the Wiehre Bahnhof has expensive but delicious German food; and the very elegant Greiffenegg-Schlössle offers a *Studentenmenü* and a great view of the Münster and the city (need to show student ID). The Markthalle is also a good option for a variety of foods and could be compared to a mall food court, only a little tastier. Mexican food is available at El Paso, El Gallo, and Enchilada – but don't expect it to be up to par with the Mexican food you're used to. In Germany, all restaurants are listed in the phone book under "Gaststätten."

- Don't wear sweats, especially to class – students don't dress as casually in Germany.
- Always be able to take yourself home from the bar. I know you've heard it a million times, but – be responsible about drinking.

Meeting People

- The other AYFers are good people, great friends, and important parts of your support network, but you will regret it if you don't make German friends. Spending so much time with other program participants from the very first day can make it difficult to break away, but it's worth it! At the same time don't completely shun all other Americans – try to figure out a healthy balance.
- Talk to your roommates! They can be your best source of daily conversational German practice, in addition to personal connections within the city. The AYF orientation tutors and mentors are also wonderful contacts to have and ask questions in the beginning of your time in Freiburg.
- Get a tandem partner (someone who wants to practice their English and will also speak German with you) as soon as possible – you could become good friends, and they can introduce you to more of their friends.
- Read the e-mails from the Studierendenwerk and the International Club; go on their excursions and respond to interesting opportunities.
- *Always* try to speak German. A lot of people will try to practice their English with you – don't let them [more than is necessary to be nice, anyway]! You're there to learn German.
- Join the softball team – the Freiburg Warthogs – even if you're not exactly professional. They're really friendly and laid-back and they let everyone play. It's a great way to meet Germans and to see a little more of Germany, since they travel for tournaments. If softball really isn't your thing, check out ultimate Frisbee or any other sport you're interested in.
- My German roommate invited me to sing along in the choir for a Christmas play. I was able to meet so many people outside of the American bubble, from little kids to grandparents! If you're even slightly interested in something that comes up, go for it!
- In university classes, sign up for a *Referat* (presentation) group with Germans. Working with other Americans may be comfortable, but working with native speakers will help your presentation and is a great way to make new friends.

- Some of the dorms will have activities – soccer, hiking, wine tasting, and more. Some are geared toward international students, and some are for all residents.
- We organized a weekly dinner group – every week someone different cooked a dinner for the whole group. This was really cheap for everyone and a great time to use my speaking skills and catch up with friends. It was also reassuring to know I'd only have to cook once every 10-12 weeks!