



# Destination: Germany

Discover the preferences  
and motivations of 16,545  
international students  
looking to study at  
universities in Germany.

A report on the QS International  
Student Survey 2024



## Executive summary

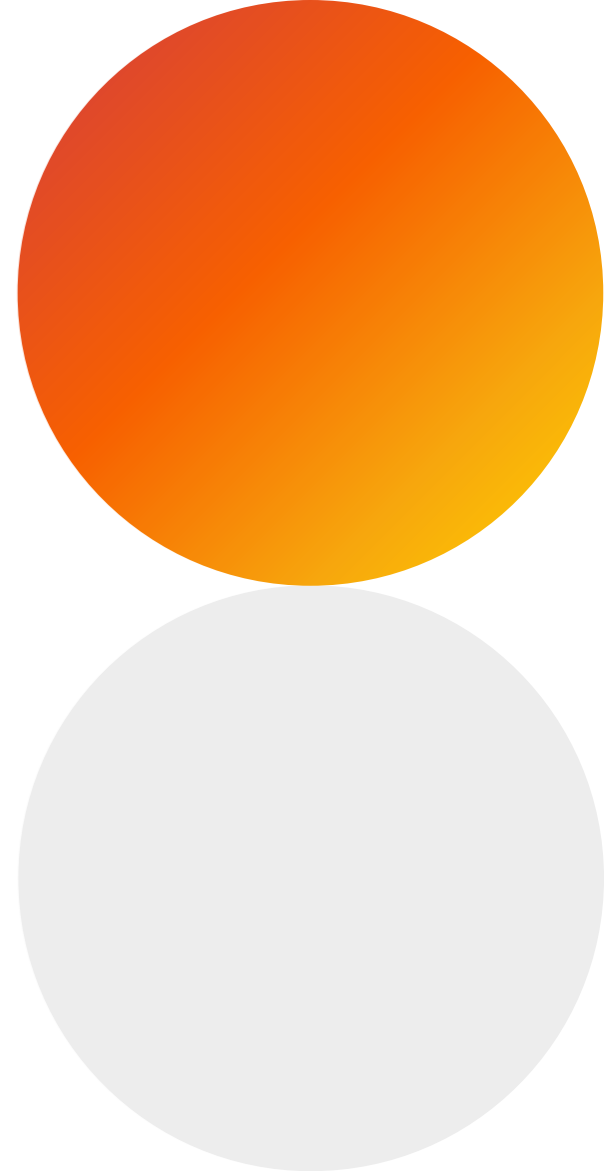
# What students say about Germany

Germany is a popular destination for international students. The latest data from the German Federal Statistical Office shows that there were 367,578 international students in Germany during the winter semester 2022/23. It offers a prestigious learning experience, with five universities in the top 100 of the QS World University Rankings 2025. 97 German programmes are among the world's top 50 in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024.

Institutional performance across Germany is strong. This comes at a time where global competition for recruiting international students is intensifying, especially in regions Germany recruits from successfully – Asia Pacific, and North Africa and the Middle East.

The findings from the QS International Student Survey 2024 say that those looking to study in Germany are looking for a welcoming environment, an affordable cost of living, and good ranking.

Information about visas and how to acquire one are particularly important for Germany-bound students. Financial concerns drive international student decision-making. German universities must continue to reassure students that higher education results in a strong return on investment, while also highlighting scholarship opportunities.



# Key findings

## A welcoming environment is the number one draw for students interested in Germany

When choosing a country, town, or city, a welcoming environment is the most important factor to students.

## YouTube is the top social platform for finding a university

61% of those interested in Germany use YouTube to research universities. The second most common platform is LinkedIn (48%).

## Financials are what worries prospective students most

Cost of living and availability of scholarships are the top two most common student concerns. Scholarships are more important to Germany-bound students than the global average.

## WhatsApp crucial for communicating with prospective students

After email, WhatsApp was the second most identified communication channel students would like to use.

## Information about visas more important

Compared to the global average, those looking to study in Germany are more concerned about acquiring a study visa.

# Recommendations

## 1

Continue to use video as part of your student recruitment strategy. **YouTube and Instagram are the most used platforms – be present on these platforms** and deliver the messages students want to hear – about high-quality teaching and a welcoming environment – using engaging visual content.

## 2

**Ensure WhatsApp is an available communication channel.** Using the platform as part of the conversion and marketing matrix is key to reaching the students that want to study in Germany.

## 3

**Highlight how you support students to acquire study visas.** Visa guidance and visa advice services are highly valued by Germany-bound students.

## 4

Prospective students are concerned about their financials. **Evidence the return on investment** a degree from your institution provides through your employability messaging, and highlight any scholarship opportunities or methods to save money on cost of living.

## 5

**Promote your welcoming environment.** Students want to see a welcoming environment in their study destination. Consider how you can actualise a welcoming environment and use that messaging in your marketing.

# Make smart choices, with real student insights

The QS International Student Survey is the largest global survey of its kind, and it has been guiding international recruitment strategies for over a decade.

**146,619**  
prospective student responses

**196**  
countries and territories

**16,545**  
interested in Germany

## Use QS International Student Survey data and insights to:

- Understand and fulfil evolving student priorities in the areas that matter most to them, like employability and sustainability.
- Identify growth opportunities.
- Refine brand positioning, adapt strategies, and showcase your difference.

Would you like help from QS experts? We will work with you to apply our insights and recommendations into your marketing and recruitment plans.

**Contact us today** and we will be happy to guide you towards recruitment excellence.





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## What do prospective students want and expect from universities in Germany?

If you partner with us for the QS International Student Survey, you receive a bespoke report for your institution.

It's free to participate – we just ask that you invite your prospective students to complete the QS International Student Survey.

**Register your interest** in partnering with us for the QS International Student Survey 2025 today.



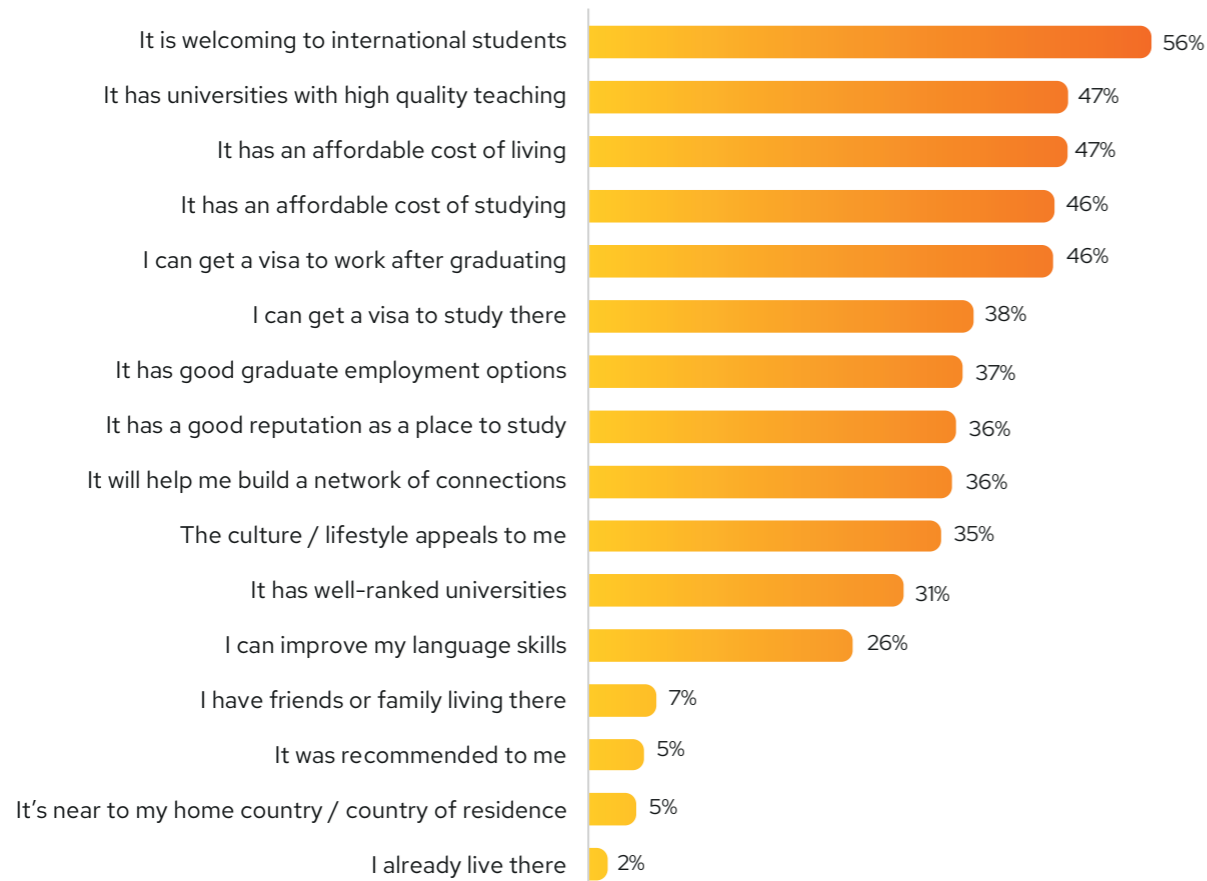
# Germany as a study destination

## Perception of Germany

56% of students looking to study in Germany said that it was important that their chosen country was welcoming to international students – the most common answer.

When choosing a town or city to study in, the percentage of students looking for a safe and welcoming place for international students is 77%. Though when it comes to studying in Germany, the majority of students aren't worried about feeling welcomed. Only 31% said that being made to feel welcome is a worry when thinking about studying abroad.

### What is most important to you when choosing a country to study in?



(Prospective students could choose up to five)

Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

## Cost of living the biggest concern for prospective students looking to study in Germany

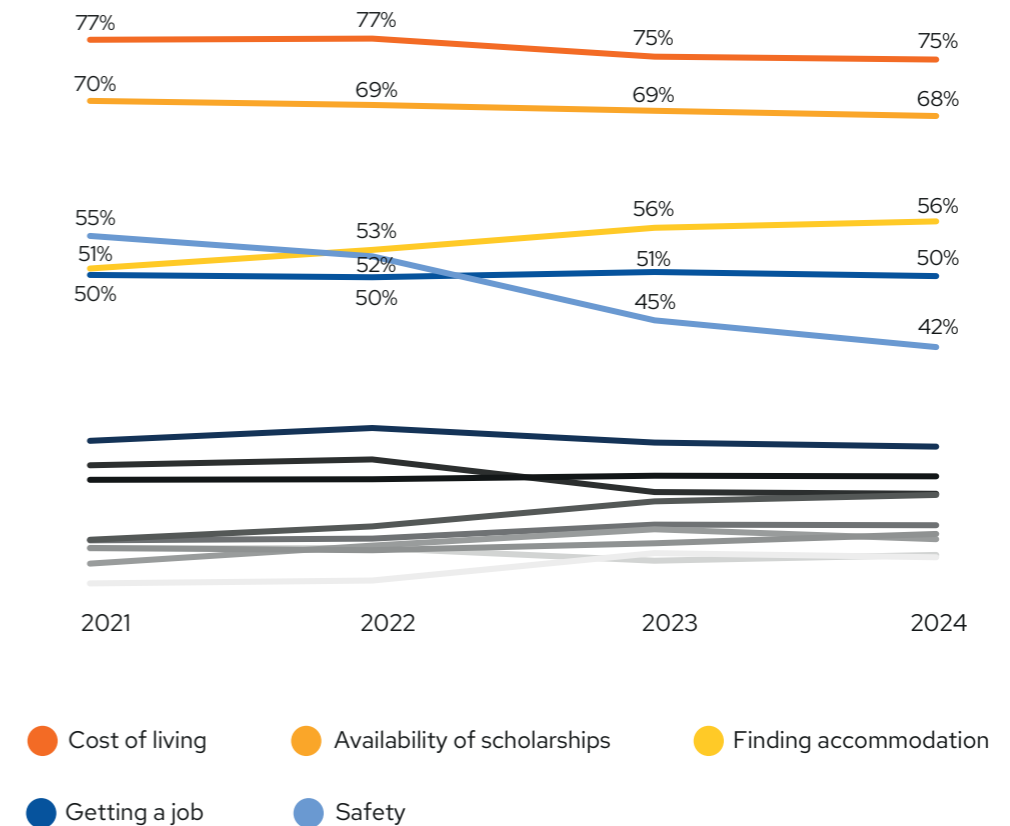
# 75%

of respondents cite cost of living as the biggest worry when considering studying in a different country.

The availability of scholarships is the second biggest worry (68%). Finding accommodation is the third largest concern overall (56%).

Student worries have mostly remained consistent from 2021 to 2024. The exception is safety which is now less cited as a concern – from 55% in 2021, down to 42% in 2024.

### What worries you most about studying in a different country?



Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

# Applying to university

## When choosing a university, prospective students seek scholarships, a welcoming environment, and high-quality teaching

66% of students looking to study in Germany said that scholarships were among the top five most important factors when choosing a university.

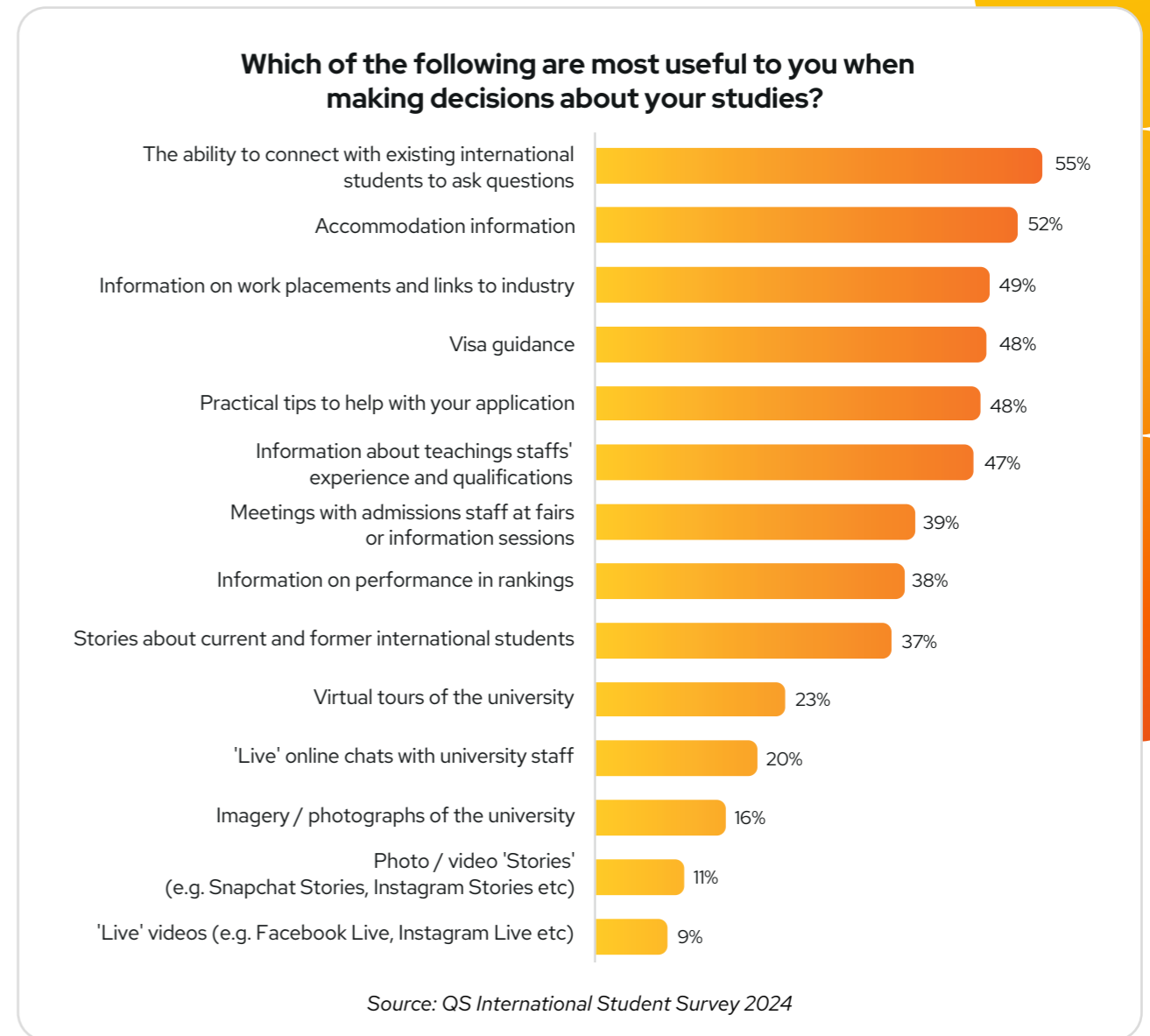
A welcoming environment was next, and third was high-quality teaching. These factors do differ to the major destination markets of Australia, the US, and the UK.

	Germany	Australia	US	UK
<b>1</b>	Scholarships <b>66%</b>	High-quality teaching <b>51%</b>	High-quality teaching <b>55%</b>	High-quality teaching <b>58%</b>
<b>2</b>	Welcoming to international students <b>55%</b>	Scholarships <b>51%</b>	Good reputation for chosen subject <b>52%</b>	Welcoming to international students <b>52%</b>
<b>3</b>	High-quality teaching <b>47%</b>	Welcoming to international students <b>51%</b>	Scholarships <b>48%</b>	Scholarships <b>47%</b>

The importance of high-quality teaching has diminished, however. In 2021, 54% of students said it was important when choosing a university, and this has dropped each year.

**Ensuring relevant scholarship information is available to prospective students is key for German institutions looking to grow international student numbers.**

## Connecting with international students most useful to decision-making



When researching a university, 55% of students looking to study in Germany said that being able to connect and ask questions of existing international students was useful. This is 7% higher than the global average.

Information on how to apply and join the university is also highly sought after. Visa guidance was identified as useful by 48% of students – 17% higher than the global average. Accommodation information and practical tips to help with their application were identified as useful by more than 40% of students.

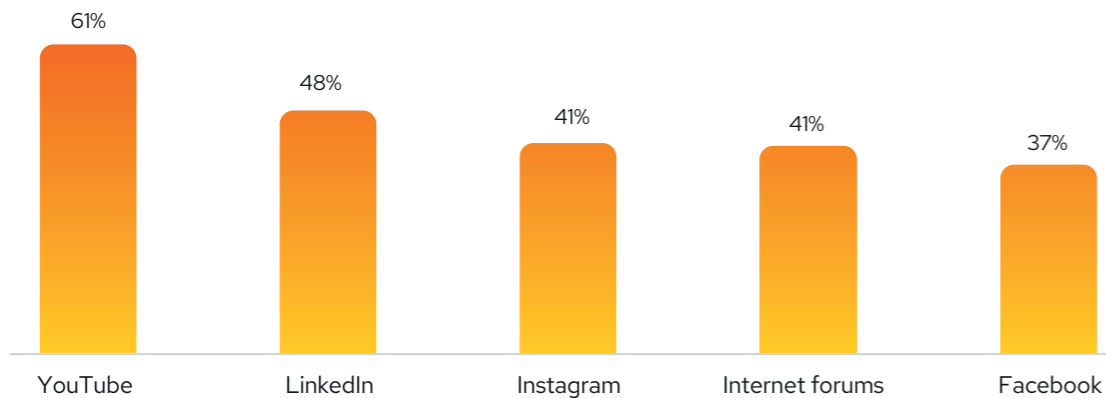
Also cited by over 40% of students was information on work placements and links to industry (49%), and information about teaching staff's experience and qualifications (47%). Information about university ranking performance was identified by 38% of students – 5% lower than the global average.

It should be noted that only 9% said live videos were useful. As marketing teams evaluate their student-facing social media channels, they should assess whether they should invest in these social media features.

## YouTube is the most popular social media platform when researching study destinations

Despite livestreams not being identified as useful, students looking to study in Germany do seek video content when making study decisions.

Which of the following types of social media do you use for research when making decisions about studying overseas? (Top five)



Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

61% of students interested in German study say they use YouTube to make study decisions. LinkedIn is the second most useful, with 48% identifying the platform. Instagram and internet forums are joint third (41%).

The strong performance of YouTube, Instagram and internet forums, plus the knowledge that prospects want to ask current students questions about their study experience re-emphasises international students' desire to hear about the authentic experience of students.

WeChat (Weixin) and Weibo were only cited by 3% and 1% of students respectively.

While LinkedIn was identified by 48% of students overall, this number is skewed by postgraduate students. Just 28% of prospective undergraduate students said they used LinkedIn when making study decisions. Another difference can be seen with TikTok usage – 18% of prospective undergraduates said they used the video platform; just 10% of postgraduate-taught students said the same.

Despite Facebook still making the top five most used social media platforms, students are using it less each year. 50% said they used the platform in 2021 – that number is now just 37%.

## Email & WhatsApp are the preferred communication channels of students looking to study in Germany

89% of students said they would like to communicate with universities via email. WhatsApp is also an important channel, and is preferred to a phone call. This is true across all study levels.

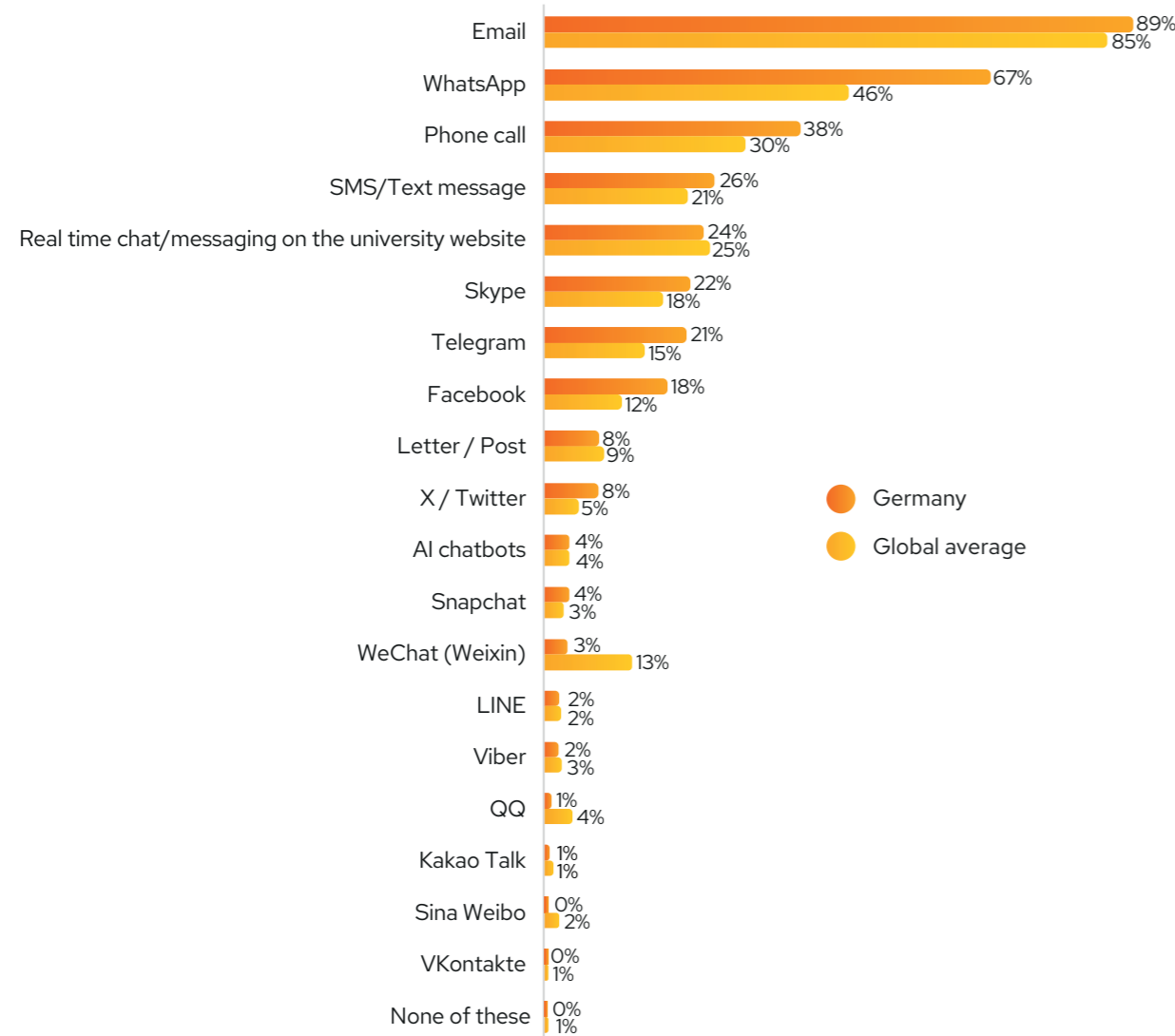
There is significant interest in instant messaging. Text messages, WhatsApp, real-time messaging on a university website were all identified by a sizeable number of respondents.

It should be noted that few are interested in using AI chatbots to communicate. Only 4% of respondents said they would be happy to communicate with one.





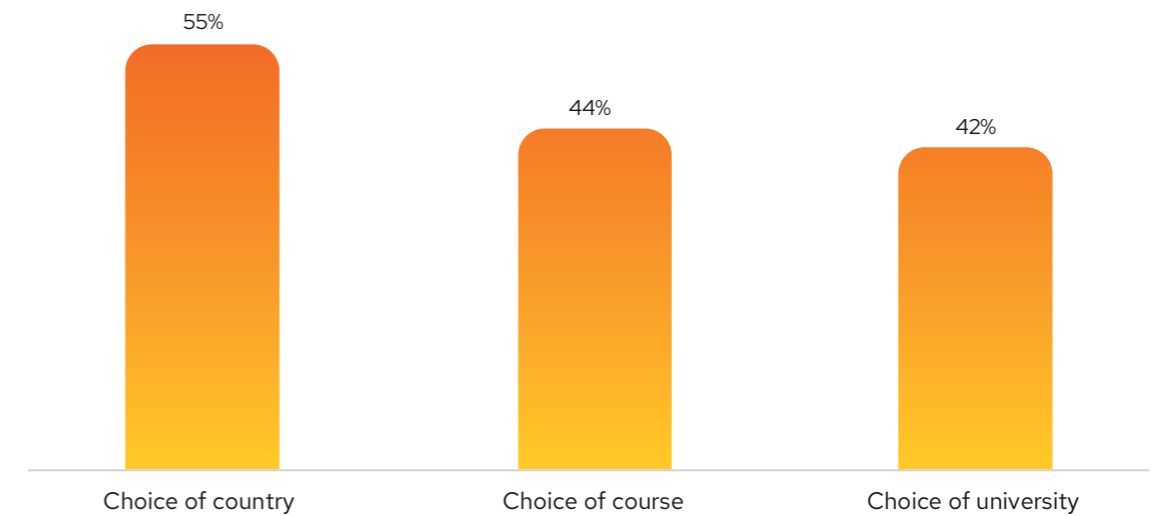
### Which of these would you like to use to communicate with a university you're considering studying at?



Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

### Parents have a significant impact on student decision-making

#### What have you discussed with your parents?



Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

**90%**

of students looking to study in Germany expect a complete and personal response to their enquiry within one week.

## Students expect a quick response to enquiries

90% expect a response within one month, while 10% are patient enough to expect a response within three months.

Students' parents are the most popular group of people to discuss study decisions with. As you would expect, this is less pronounced among postgraduate students. Only 35% of postgraduate-research students have discussed their choice of university with their parents, compared to 52% of undergraduates. Parents also hold significant influence – 58% of prospective students looking to study in Germany say their parents have a 'fair amount' or 'a lot' of influence in their study decisions.

The second most common group of people to discuss study options with are advisors at their current education establishment. Agents are not often used – only 11% say they have discussed their choice of university with an agent. 43% of students don't plan to use an agent at all.

Those that are going to use an agent say they don't have much influence. 68% agree or strongly agree that agents are useful in helping them study overseas, but don't influence their decisions.

**43%**

of students don't plan to use an agent at all.



# How do those looking to study in Germany differ to the global average?

With over 100,000 responses, we can use the QS International Student Survey data to compare the perspectives and motivations of students hoping to travel to different destination markets, and how students that wish to study there compare to the global average.

Those looking to study in Germany express few differences to students from the rest of the world. However, those differences present opportunities for German universities to stand out.

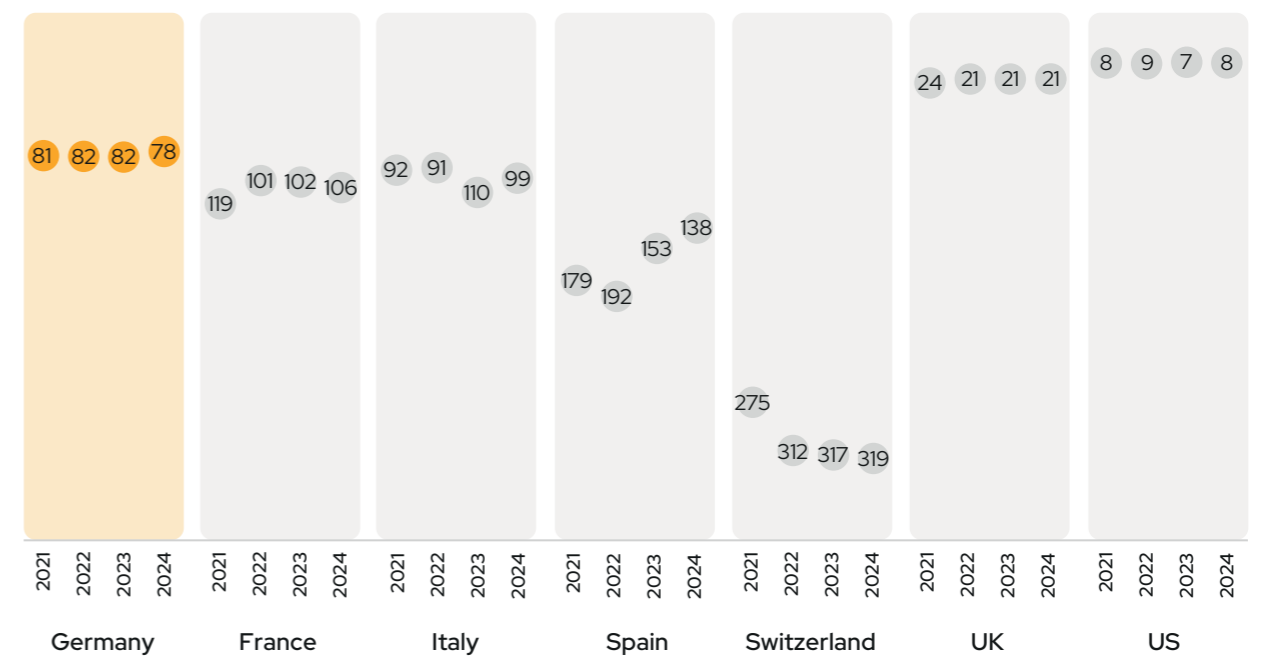


## Engineering and Technology is the most common study field

Unlike many other international student destination markets, Engineering and Technology is the most commonly cited study field by respondents. Three German universities are in the world's top 50 for Engineering and Technology in the QS World

University Rankings by Subject 2024, with particularly strong performance in our research and discovery metrics. When we look at the average rank of the top five across Engineering and Technology subjects, Germany's performance is stronger than continental European peers.

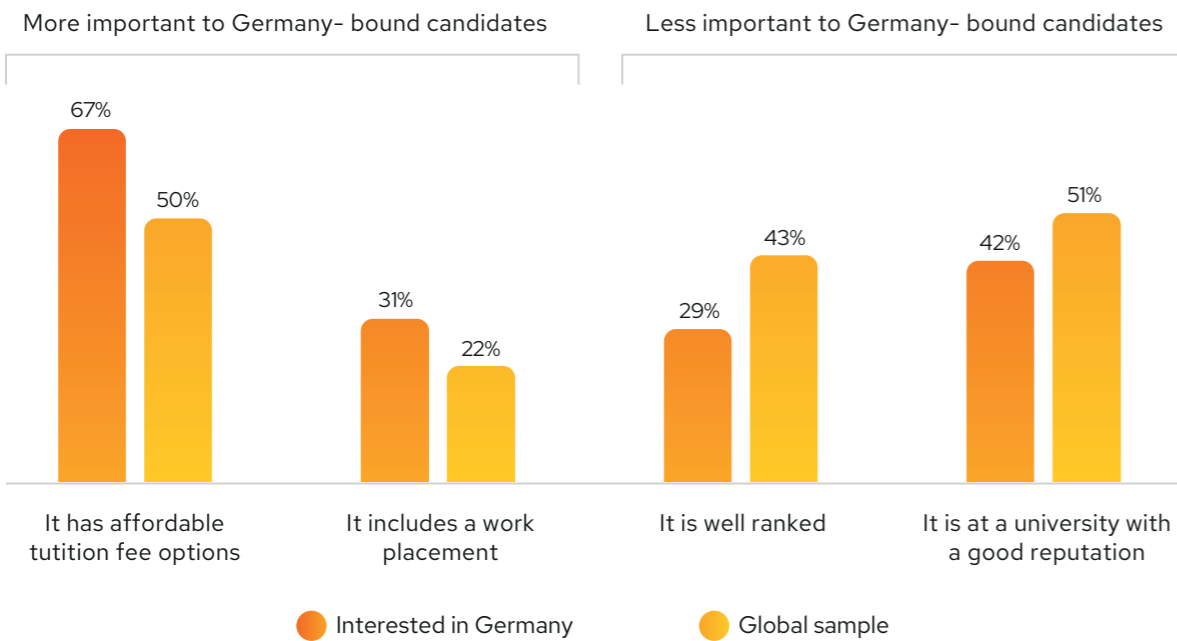
Engineering & Technology: Average rank Germany vs Peers (Top 5 in each subject)



Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

## Affordable tuition fees and work placements more important to Germany-bound candidates

### What five things are most important to you when choosing a course?



Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

When choosing a course, ranking and reputation is less of a concern to those interested in Germany – though reputation is still the sixth most important factor.

## Enrolling and staying in Germany

Students interested in studying in Germany are more concerned about meeting entry requirements (42%) compared to the global benchmark (26%). Students coming from Africa & Middle East are the most concerned about meeting the entry requirements.

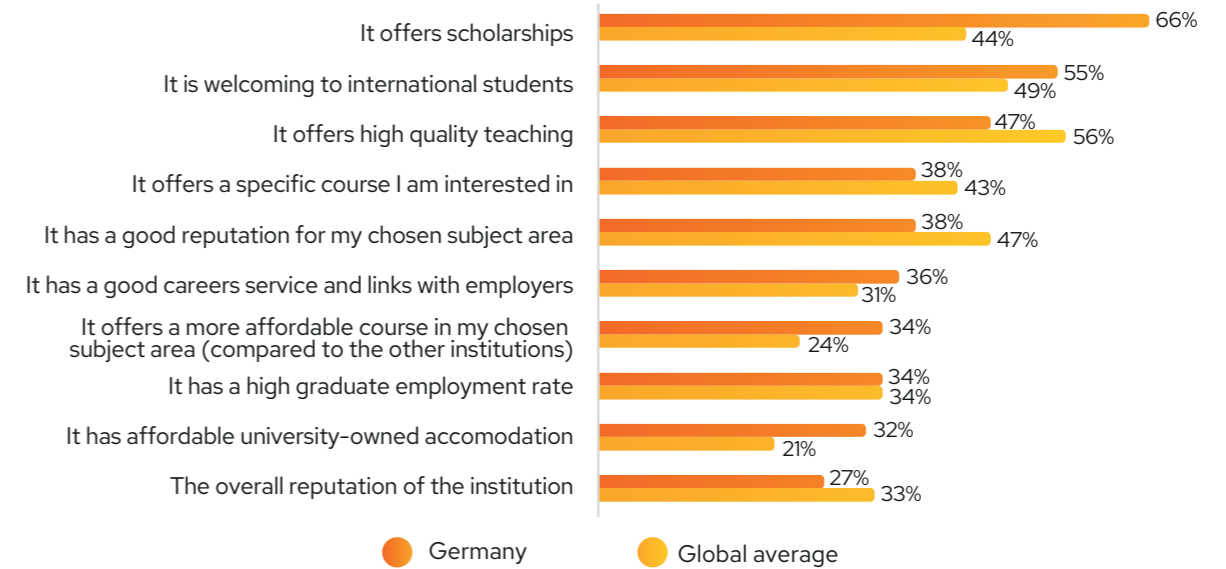
Acquiring a visa is clearly more of a concern to Germany-bound students. Visa guidance is seen as more useful when making study decisions (48%) compared to the global benchmark (31%). It's more important that there is a visa advice service at their chosen university, and getting a visa to study there is more important when choosing a country to study in.

After graduation, almost half of all respondents (46%) say it is important to know that they will be able to secure a visa to travel, study and work in Germany. A staggering 90% of respondents say that they would seek a visa to stay and work in Germany if it was accessible to them – 5% higher than the global average. Most students (51%) have the intention to stay between 1-3 years.

In line with this focus on job prospects, more than half of students interested in Germany (56%) say that an important factor when assessing a university's teaching quality is if the university organises work placements as part of its courses, and 57% say a high graduate employment rate is also important. Both of these factors are reported at slightly higher rates than the global average.

## Scholarships far more important to students looking to study in Germany

### What five things are most important to you when choosing a university



Source: QS International Student Survey 2024

As we discussed earlier in the report, affordability is very important to students interested in Germany. When choosing a country, Germany-bound students place more importance on having affordable costs of living (47%) and studying (46%), compared to the global average (32% and 33% respectively). When choosing a town or city to study in, affordable rental accommodation and being able to work while studying are both more important than the global average.

Appendix

# Germany, Australia, the UK and the US

Destination markets



## How do they compare?

### What matters most when choosing a course?

	Germany	Australia	US	UK
1	Affordable tuition fee options	High-quality teaching	High-quality teaching	High-quality teaching
2	High-quality teaching	Affordable tuition fee options	University has a good reputation	University has a good reputation
3	Leads to my chosen career	University has a good reputation	Personal interest in the subject	Affordable tuition fees

### What matters most when choosing a university?

	Germany	Australia	US	UK
1	Offers scholarships	High-quality teaching	High-quality teaching	High-quality teaching
2	Welcoming to international students	Offers scholarships	Good reputation for chosen subject	Good reputation for chosen subject
3	High-quality teaching	Welcoming to international students	Scholarships	Welcoming to international students

### What matters most when choosing a country?

	Germany	Australia	US	UK
1	Welcoming to international students	Welcoming to international students	High-quality teaching	High-quality teaching
2	High-quality teaching	High-quality teaching	Welcoming to international students	Welcoming to international students
3	Affordable cost of living	The culture / lifestyle appeals to me	Well-ranked universities	Well-ranked universities

### The top ten source markets for France, Australia, the UK, and the US

	Germany	Australia	US	UK
1	India	China	China	China
2	China	India	India	India
3	Syria	Nepal	South Korea	Nigeria
4	Austria	Colombia	Canada	Pakistan
5	Türkiye	Vietnam	Vietnam	US
6	Iran	Thailand	Taiwan	Hong Kong (SAR)
7	Russia	Brazil	Saudi Arabia	Bangladesh
8	Italy	Philippines	Brazil	Malaysia
9	Ukraine	Pakistan	Mexico	France
10	Pakistan	Indonesia	Nigeria	Italy

Source: Germany - Federal Statistical Office | Australia - Dept of Education | US - Open Doors | UK - HESA 2022/23



### Demographics of those interested in Germany

#### Gender

Female	36%
Male	59%
Prefer not to say or to self-describe	5%

#### Age

17-20	20%
21-24	29%
25-31	34%
32 or older	18%

#### Funding

Self-funded	34%
Scholarship	43%
Loan	5%
Sponsorship	5%
Not sure / other	11%

#### Study level

Foundation or vocational	4%
Undergraduate	28%
Postgraduate taught	37%
Postgraduate research	32%

#### Main subjects of interest

Engineering and Technology	19%
Business and Management	17%
Computing	12%

#### Household income

Less than \$10,000	52%
\$10,001 - \$25,000	14%
\$25,001 - \$50,000	6%
\$50,001 - \$75,000	2%
Over \$75,000	4%
Don't know / prefer not to say	23%



## Want to delve deeper into what your future students think?

We provide bespoke reports for institutions which partner with us to encourage prospective students to participate in the QS International Student Survey.

Benchmark the needs and wants of your prospective students against other universities in the region and across the globe.

**Register your interest**  
in partnering with us for the  
QS International Student Survey 2025.

