

5 Steps to Residency in Germany

What Every International Doctor Should Know

Every great journey starts with a single step

This guide will take you step by step through the process, from recognizing your degree to securing a residency position.

Step 1

Understanding the Medical System in Germany

Structure of Medical Training

In Germany, the medical career path consists of:

- ☐ **Medical School** (6 years)
- ☐ **Approbation** (Full medical license)
- ☐ **Residency (Facharztausbildung)** (5-6 years depending on specialty)
- ☐ **Specialist Certification** (Facharztprüfung)

As an international medical graduate or doctor, your first goal is to get your medical degree recognized and obtain Approbation to start working as a doctor.

Step 2

Language Requirements

Why is German Proficiency Essential?

Medicine is about communication, and in Germany, fluent German is a must. You will be dealing with patients, colleagues, and medical documentation, all in German.

Required German Levels

- ☐ **B2 Level** (General Language Proficiency)
 - Required for visa and initial applications.
- ☐ **C1 Level** (Medical German Fachsprachprüfung)
 - Required for working as a doctor. You must pass a medical language exam to prove your communication skills in a clinical setting.

How to Prepare for the Language Exams?

- ☐ Take intensive German courses, preferably with a medical focus.
- ☐ Practice speaking with native speakers and medical professionals.
- ☐ Enroll in preparatory courses for the Fachsprachprüfung offered in Germany.

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Step 3

Recognition of Your Medical Degree (Berufsanerkennung)

Before applying for residency, your medical degree must be recognized in Germany.

Two Main Pathways:

Approbation
(Permanent Medical License)

☐ Full and unrestricted medical license, allowing you to work anywhere in Germany.

Berufserlaubnis
(Temporary Medical Permit)

☐ A limited, temporary permit allowing you to work while preparing for the knowledge exam (Kenntnisprüfung).

Checklist for Recognition

1

☐ Find the Recognizing Authority (Approbationsbehörde)

Each state (Bundesland) has its own medical licensing authority. You must apply in the state where you plan to work.

2

☐ Submit Your Documents

- Medical Degree (translated and certified)
- University Transcript
- Proof of Clinical Rotations
- CV and Passport
- German Language Certificates (B2 & C1 Medical FSP)

3

☐ Deficiency Notice (Defizitbescheid)

If your degree is not considered equivalent, you may need to take the Kenntnisprüfung (medical knowledge exam).

Once approved, you will receive your **Approbation**, allowing you to officially work as a doctor in Germany.

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Step 4

Finding a Residency Position (Facharztausbildung)

Overview of Residency (Weiterbildung) in Germany

- ☐ Residency leads to Facharzt/Fachärztin title (medical specialist)
- ☐ Duration: 5-6 years

Structure & Blocks

- ☐ Weiterbildung is organized in thematic blocks
- ☐ Each block has defined competencies
- ☐ You must complete documented clinical rotations and minimum procedural experiences

Logbook & Documentation

- ☐ Every doctor in residency must maintain a Weiterbildungslogbuch. This logbook is a mandatory document, especially during annual meetings with your supervisor.

Specializations & Zusatzbezeichnungen (Additional Qualifications)

Most can be acquired after Facharzt recognition. Examples:

- ☐ Geriatrics
- ☐ Emergency Medicine
- ☐ Rehabilitation
- ☐ Sleep Medicine
- ☐ Psychotherapy
- ☐ Occupational Medicine

Unlike in the US or UK, there is no centralized application system for residency. You must apply directly to hospitals.

How to Apply?

☐ Research Hospitals

- Look for teaching hospitals with residency programs in your desired specialty.

☐ Prepare Your Application

- Cover Letter (Anschreiben)
- CV (Lebenslauf)
- Approbation Certificate

☐ Apply to Multiple Hospitals

- Competition can be tough, so apply widely
- Send your Bewerbung directly
- Use Bewerbungsportale (application platforms)
- Use hospital career pages
- Look for Stellenangebote (job ads)
- Apply directly or upload Bewerbung under Bewerbungsunterlagen hochladen

☐ Prepare for Interviews

- Interviews are usually conducted in German and assess both medical knowledge and language proficiency

Beyond the job search and application:

- ☐ You'll need to register with the appropriate Ärztekammer (Medical Chamber)
- ☐ Set up your health and liability insurance
- ☐ Understand your Versorgungswerk (pension system for physicians)

Step 5

Becoming a Specialist

Once you start your Facharztausbildung, you will work under supervision, gradually gaining independence. After 5-6 years, you will take the Facharztprüfung (specialist exam).

Medical specialist training (Facharztausbildung) is primarily conducted in approved training facilities (Weiterbildungsstätten) as a full-time, main professional activity, with appropriate remuneration.

It involves practical work and theoretical instruction under the guidance of authorized supervising physicians (befugte Ärzte), and sometimes includes participation in recognized courses.

The prescribed training content and duration are minimum requirements, and the training period may be extended if the necessary competencies cannot be acquired within the minimum time.

Part-time training is permissible if it maintains the same overall duration, level, and quality as full-time training, generally requiring at least half of the weekly working hours, with the training period extended proportionally.

Upon successful completion of specialist training, a physician can obtain one of three main types of qualifications:

☐ **Facharztbezeichnung (Specialist Title):**

- This signifies qualification in a defined medical field (Gebiet), outlining the boundaries for specialist practice within that area.
- Examples include Facharzt/Fachärztin for Allgemeinmedizin (General Medicine), Anästhesiologie (Anesthesiology), or various surgical specializations.

☐ **Schwerpunktbezeichnung (Sub-specialty Title):**

- This represents a further specialization within an existing Facharzt field. For example, within "Chirurgie," one can specialize in "Spezielle Orthopädische Chirurgie" (Specialized Orthopedic Surgery) or "Spezielle Viszeralchirurgie" (Specialized Visceral Surgery).
- A Schwerpunktbezeichnung can only be held in conjunction with the corresponding Facharztbezeichnung.

☐ **Zusatzbezeichnung (Additional Qualification Title):**

- These qualifications involve specialization in training content that is supplementary to Facharzt and Schwerpunkt training. Examples include "Akupunktur" (Acupuncture), "Ernährungsmedizin" (Nutritional Medicine), or "Notfallmedizin" (Emergency Medicine).
- Zusatzbezeichnungen generally do not expand the defined boundaries of specialist activities but add specific expertise. They must be used in conjunction with "Arzt," "Praktischer Arzt," or a Facharztbezeichnung.

Career Options After Residency

- ☐ Work as a specialist in Germany.
- ☐ Open your own practice.
- ☐ Pursue subspecialization or academic research.



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Final Steps

Keep Going!

The road to becoming a doctor in Germany is not easy, but it is absolutely possible with determination, preparation, and resilience. Many international doctors have successfully built their careers in Germany, and you can too.

Remember:

☐ **Stay patient and persistent**

- The process takes time, but every step gets you closer to your goal

☐ **Improve your German skills**

- This is the key to success

☐ **Build connections**

- Networking with other doctors and mentors can open new opportunities.

Ready to Start?

Begin by learning German, gathering your documents, and researching hospitals. Your goal is within reach. Keep pushing forward!

✨ Mentorship Program ✨

This program is designed for **international medical graduates** and **doctors** who want to start their **medical career in Germany** and feel *confident, informed, and supported* every step of the way.

It's **practical**. It's **structured**. And it's built from my **real experience**.

- ☐ How to apply for residency (Bewerbung – CV, emails, interviews)
- ☐ Step-by-step onboarding in the German hospital system
- ☐ Communication, soft skills & intercultural awareness
- ☐ Real-life insights, case studies & expert interviews
- ☐ Downloadable worksheets, checklists & live Q&A sessions

Ready to transform your medical career in Germany?

For full details and insider updates, visit danielaprisacaru.com

**Join the waitlist now to be the first to hear about the official launch,
unlock exclusive early-bird benefits, and secure your spot in the
Mentorship Program!**

Thank you for reading!

This guide was created by Daniela Prisacaru, founder of MedStudyGermany.

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