

Newcomer Information on Miscellanea

Although some of the following formation might seem obvious to you, previous PhD Fellows – especially those who had never been to Europe or Germany before – drew our attention to the following issues:

German Specifics

German punctuality

- It might be a stereotype but there is a true core to it – at least as far as public transportation is concerned. Despite occasional delays, public transportation in Germany is usually on time and bus/tram/train conductors are unlikely to wait for you even if they see you running towards their departure station. Many Jacobs students have wondered about this lack of flexibility. Please bear this in mind unless you want to wave goodbye to your train before waiting for half an hour for the next one.

Contracts and cancellation periods

- The German legal system lacks the flexibility regarding contracts and cancellation periods that some of you might be used to. If your telephone contract gives a three months cancellation period you will not get out of it before then. Release payments are usually not accepted so be careful what you sign. If in doubt: try to get help from a German native speaker.

Garbage separation

- Recycling is important in Germany and if you are not separating your garbage you might get fined or – maybe worse – your garbage might not get picked up.

Mail

- Make sure your name is on your mailbox or your letters will not reach you.

Doctors

- Most of you will have a German public health insurance that covers most treatments and some preventive medical checkups. Still: Make sure to ask your doctor or your health insurance BEFORE a treatment starts whether it is covered or whether it causes additional costs for you.
- Most doctors will not be available on Wednesday and Friday afternoons - not even for making appointments.

Bicycle lanes

- Bremen is a cyclists' town. In Germany, bicycle lanes are usually part of the pedestrian sideway, not of the road, and often recognizable by their red

flagging. Don't walk or stand on this part of the sidewalk unless you want passing cyclists to ring their bells at you.

Daylight saving time

- Germany advances the clock one hour during summer.
- The last Sunday in March marks the beginning of summer time, the last Sunday in October marks the shift from summer to winter time.

Transportation in Bremen and infrastructure at the Universities

Bremen is very much a cyclists' town. So one of the first things you might want to get when moving to Bremen is a bicycle.

Those who prefer busses and trams will be happy to hear that Bremen has an excellent public transportation system. Bus and tram schedules can be found on the English website of Bremen's public transportation company, the [Bremen Straßenbahn AG \(BSAG\)](#). This can be very useful when trying to find out whether an apartment is situated conveniently for your purposes.

As BIGSSS PhD students, you will be enrolled at both Jacobs University and the University of Bremen. This includes access to the infrastructure of both universities. Apart from access to libraries and cafeterias (at UB this is called Mensa, at Jacobs University they are called serveries), you will also get a so-called Semesterticket that is included in your tuition fees. The Semesterticket allows you to use public transportation (busses, trams, regional busses, even some trains) within Bremen and the area surrounding the city. Postdoctoral fellows do not receive a Semesterticket.

For directions to our two campuses, please see the [Visit Us](#) section on the BIGSSS website. Jacobs University can be easily reached by train (stop "Bremen-Schönebeck") followed by a five-minute walk. To get to the University of Bremen, take tram N° 6 and get off at stop "Berufsbildungswerk". There are also several busses going to the University of Bremen (e.g. N° 21, 22).

Language Courses

Although BIGSSS is an English-language institution and many people in Bremen do speak English well enough for you to get along in everyday life, we strongly recommend learning German to all new Fellows. Speaking and understanding German will make your life for the next three years much easier and enable you to experience German culture much more intensively.

To support you in your language-learning efforts, BIGSSS cooperates with the [Goethe Institut in Bremen](#) and the [language centre](#) (Fremdsprachenzentrum) at the University of Bremen and offers subsidized language courses. For more detailed information on reimbursement, please contact our [Head of Administration](#).

Jacobs University also offers language courses for its students and staff but courses only take place during the semester. Please visit [Jacobs' language program website](#) to find out more about their course schedules.

Another option is to take a language course at the [adult education centre](#) in Bremen (Volkshochschule Bremen).

Those of you interested in intensive language courses might want to have a look at the [International Summer Language Courses](#) offered by the University of Bremen and the University's language center every summer. There are usually two course periods at different levels of German succeeding each other. Both courses cover four weeks.