

DEALING WITH THE FOREIGNER'S OFFICE (AUSLÄNDERBEHÖRDE)



**Dealing With the
Foreigner's Office**



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DISCLAIMERS

→ NO WARRANTY FOR ACCURACY

The information in this document is true according to my research, official websites and the best of my knowledge. It is still possible that not everything is 100% accurate, or that some things change without me noticing right away.

If you notice some information being inaccurate, please get in contact with me (s. pp.8, 10)!

If you are unsure whether something is still accurate, please have a look at the links below (s. p.11), especially the [overview page](#) and the [page for international students](#) on the Foreigner's office website and / or contact me before acting upon the information in this document.

→ DOCUMENT UPDATING

This document may be updated in case some of the information is no longer up to date or some new information comes up.

This version is from **March 2026**.

You can find the newest version at the bottom of my [website](#)

(you can also find the QR code to my website at the bottom of every page in this document).

→ OTHER HELPFUL DOCUMENTS

For some points below, other documents providing more detailed information are mentioned. You can find them at the bottom of my [website](#) as well.

The following documents are mentioned:

- 'Welcome sessions' flyer:
 - WELCOME SESSIONS for international degree-seeking students (International Office)
- Handbook:
 - HANDBOOK for international students (maintained by international economics students)
→ NO official University document

Feel free to go through the documents for information not related to the Foreigner's Office as well. Note that not all of the information in the handbook might be correct and up-to-date.



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NOTE: REGISTERING WITH THE CITIZEN'S OFFICE

Within **one week** of your arrival, you have to register at the Citizen's Office ('Bürgeramt').

Find more detailed information in the **'Welcome sessions' flyer** (s. p.3).

There is also some information on registering with the Citizen's Office in the **handbook** (s. p.3), however it is less detailed and not as up-to-date as the 'Welcome sessions' flyer.

APPLYING FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT

If you enter Germany without a visa and your stay exceeds three months **or** if you enter Germany with a visa and your visa expires before the end of your stay, you are required to apply for a residence permit.

Students from EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland do not require a visa or residence permit.

Find more detailed information on the official procedure in the **'Welcome sessions' flyer** (s. p.3).

As for registering with the Citizen's Office, there is some information in the **handbook** (s. p.5) as well which is less detailed.

It is very much possible that you will not get your residence permit in time.

Find more information under **What happens if you do not receive your document(s) in time?** and **What can you do if you do not receive your document(s) in time?** (s. pp.5-9).



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WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE YOUR DOCUMENT(S) IN TIME?

→ THE FOREIGNER'S OFFICE: CONTEXT

It happens on a regular basis that the foreigner's office does not provide required documents in time. The Foreigner's Office is generally understaffed and currently, they are even more understaffed than usually. Additionally, they are having problems finding new people to work there.

So you should be prepared for longer waiting times.

On top of that, there are many people who experienced the Foreigner's Office (or at least some of the people working there) as racist and quite unfriendly.

So you should be prepared for that when being in contact with them as well.

→ 'FRISTWAHRENDE ANTRAGSTELLUNG'

If you submit an online application and you do not receive the required document(s) in time, your application counts as 'fristwährend' (this is *not only* the case for a residence permit, but in general). This means that - in the case of a residence permit, for example -, your stay in Germany **continues to be legal** if you submitted the application, even if you did not receive any official documents.

Of course, this is not very helpful if you need your residence permit for other things, like a job for instance. For this case, see '**Fiktionsbescheinigung**' (p.6) and '**Contacting the Foreigner's Office**' (pp.7-9).



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→ 'FIKTIONSBSCHHEINIGUNG'

Sometimes, if the Foreigner's Office does not manage to provide your residency document in time, they can provide a 'Fiktionsbescheinigung' instead.

If your current document expires soon, you can also explicitly ask for it (s. **Contacting the Foreigner's Office**, pp.7-10).

A Fiktionsbescheinigung *temporarily* replaces your residency document and ...

- If you currently have some residency title and apply for a prolongation **and**
- If you submitted an application for the prolongation in time,

... a Fiktionsbescheinigung encompasses the same rights as your current residency title.

A Fiktionsbescheinigung is valid for as long as the Foreigner's Office has not yet processed your application for a residency document.

It is accepted by the University, so if you have a job there, a Fiktionsbescheinigung works just as well as a residence permit, for instance.

If you have a job at Uni and are having trouble because they do not accept a Fiktionsbescheinigung, you can contact the International Office or me (s. pp.8, 10).

However:

There are different kinds of Fiktionsbescheinigung, and what exactly you can do with them depends on the kind that you received.

In case you do receive a Fiktionsbescheinigung, please inform yourself about the rights it grants you, **especially** before traveling outside of Germany!

If you are unsure, feel free to get in contact with me (s. pp.8, 10).



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WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE YOUR DOCUMENT(S) IN TIME?

→ CONTACTING THE FOREIGNER'S OFFICE

If you do not receive your document(s) in time, you can contact the Foreigner's Office directly.

Some notes on that:

Unfriendliness

As mentioned above (s. **The Foreigner's Office: Context**, p.5), dealing with them can be quite stressful, it might be good to have that in mind.

Order of processing

Usually, they take care of the applications in the order of urgency, so if they are understaffed they will first take care of the applications where the previous documents are expiring (or expired already) before taking care of the applications where the previous document is still valid for some time.

However, it might still be of importance to receive the required document(s) some time before the previous one(s) expire(s), for instance for job contracts or if you plan to travel.

In this case, you can either ask for a 'Fiktionsbescheinigung' (s. **'Fiktionsbescheinigung'**, p.6) (in the case of job contracts, for traveling it depends on your current residency situation), **or** get in contact with the Foreigner's Office.

Contact person system

The Foreigner's Office is working with a contact person system, which means that people working there are responsible for people sending in applications based on the first letter(s) of their family names.

You can find your contact person in the [overview on their website](#).

Click the link, then open the toggle 'An wen muss ich mich wenden?' at the bottom of the page.

If you want to contact the Foreigner's Office regarding your case, write an email **directly to your contact person**.

You can put the Foreigner's Office email address (abh@osnabrueck.de) and the team leader, Frau Stegemann (stegemann@osnabrueck.de), in CC.



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→ **CONTACTING THE FOREIGNER'S OFFICE**

What can you do if you do not get a reply to your inquiry?

As mentioned above, long waiting times are normal.

If it is really urgent, there are two more things you can try:

1. Support points:

There are several points you can get in touch with to try and speed up the process.

These points can support you with your case and help build up pressure so that the Foreigner's Office processes your case more quickly, as they may have better chances at getting through to the Foreigner's Office.

- General Student Committee (AStA) department for International Affairs (me)
 - astaint@uos.de (contact from your University email address)
- International Office
 - incoming@uos.de (contact from your University email address)
- Exil e.V.
 - An association supporting refugees and migrants - find more information on their [website](#)
 - beratung@exilverein.de

Note that there is no guarantee that it will work right away.

There are some examples where it sped up the process significantly, however this is not always the case.

You can also contact these support points for other matters related to the Foreigner's Office, or for matters not related to the Foreigner's Office at all.

Have a look at the respective websites to see what they might be able to help you with before contacting them.

You might find what you are looking for on the websites already.



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→ **CONTACTING THE FOREIGNER'S OFFICE**

What can you do if you do not get a reply to your inquiry?

2. Going there yourself:

In some cases, it has led to results when students went to the Foreigner's Office themselves. You can ask for the location of the office of your contact person at the reception and then wait for them to come out of the office and ask them about your case.

You can do this several times as well, until they are basically so annoyed that they just do what you ask. Keep in mind that you might need a lot of patience (you may need to go there for several days until you get a chance to talk to your contact person) and a thick skin.

Generally, it can help going with a person who speaks German fluently (this is the case for official appointments as well, by the way).

Like with option 1, there is no guarantee it will work.



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CONCLUDING REMARKS

As might have become obvious, having to deal with the Foreigner's Office is often a real pain. Unfortunately, changing this is quite difficult, as improving the experiences of people having to deal with the Foreigner's Office would require some larger, structural changes and the political will to do so.

Hopefully, this document has still been helpful in giving you an overview of what to expect and how to deal with different situations and the Foreigner's Office in general.

For any questions &/ feedback, please write me an email (astaint@uos.de).

Please use your **University email address** for contacting me, as emails from other providers are sometimes intercepted.



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LINKS

In the order of appearance:

- Overview page of the Foreigner's Office Osnabrück:
 - <https://service.osnabrueck.de/dienstleistungen/-/egov-bis-detail/dienstleistung/5221/show>
- Official information for international students from the city of Osnabrück (in German)
 - <https://service.osnabrueck.de/dienstleistungen/-/egov-bis-detail/dienstleistung/5222/show>
- Department for International Affairs - General Student Committee Osnabrück University:
 - <https://www.asta.uni-osnabrueck.de/ueber-den-asta/referat-fuer-internationales>
- Exil e.V.
 - <https://exilverein.de/>

Further links not explicitly mentioned above:

- International Office - Osnabrück University
 - <https://www.uni-osnabrueck.de/en/university/institutions-from-a-to-z/international-office>



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