

At a Glance

A Brief Portrait of Freie Universität Berlin





Designed by Norman Foster, the Philological Library is enclosed within a building complex that is home to the humanities and social sciences. Freie Universität offers its employees outstanding working conditions and a relaxed atmosphere among lush green surroundings. PHOTO: BAVARIA LUFTBILD

EXCELLENCE ON A GREEN CAMPUS

Freie Universität Berlin is a young, international university with a unique history. It is among the few universities to have received the distinction of “University of Excellence” in all three rounds of Germany’s Excellence Initiative. The university’s offices abroad in cities such as Cairo, New Delhi, and São Paulo provide a platform for international cooperation. According to recent QS World University Rankings, Freie Universität Berlin is among the best one hundred universities in the world and is the fourth ranked university in Germany. The Times Higher Education (THE) Ranking also lists Freie Universität Berlin among the world’s top one hundred universities, and it was recognized as the top German university regarding climate action, gender equality, and other parameters in THE’s Impact Ranking. Situated in the southwestern suburbs of Berlin, the university is an integral contributor to one of the largest and most important research hubs in Europe.

COMMITTED TO UPHOLDING FREEDOM

Freie Universität Berlin was founded on December 4, 1948, as a joint effort by students and professors with the support of the American Allies and various Berlin-based politicians. This act was in response to the persecution faced by students who took a critical stance toward Berlin's main university at that time, which was located in the Soviet sector of the divided city. They wanted to establish a university where its members were able to study, teach, and research free from political interference. Thanks to generous donations from the United States, Freie Universität was able to construct several new main buildings, including the Benjamin Franklin university hospital complex and the Henry Ford Building, which houses the university's largest lecture halls. Due to its unique history, Freie Universität Berlin is particularly committed to the principles of truth, justice, and freedom.



US President John F. Kennedy held an iconic speech at Freie Universität lauding our core values in 1963.

PHOTO: UNIVERSITY ARCHIVE OF
FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN

The Henry Ford Building, designed to be the main lecture building on campus, was built in the 1950s.

PHOTO: BERND WANNENMACHER



INTERNATIONAL – FROM THE VERY BEGINNING



People from over 100 countries come to Freie Universität to study, work, teach, and research.

PHOTO: PETER HIMSEL

Ever since Freie Universität Berlin was first established with the support of the international community in 1948, research and teaching here has been defined and driven by international cooperation. From its isolated position in West Berlin, Freie Universität established connections to organizations and individuals in West Germany, Europe, and around the world in order to survive and thrive as an intellectual and academic institution. What began as a necessity rapidly evolved into a successful strategy. Freie Universität currently maintains at least 200 bilateral partnerships with research institutions worldwide. It is one of the most internationally renowned and popular German research universities – visiting scholars from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation frequently select it as the destination of their research stays. Thirty-eight percent of doctoral candidates here come from abroad.

A YOUNG UNIVERSITY STEEPED IN TRADITION

Freie Universität Berlin is located in the idyllic residential district of Dahlem in the southwest of Germany's capital city. This neighborhood is home to many research institutions, including four Max Planck Institutes, the Zuse Institute Berlin, and the German Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, following Prussia's plans to establish a "German Oxford," Dahlem developed into a center for research of the highest caliber. The first new buildings housed government science agencies and the new research institutes of what was then known as the University of Berlin. The Kaiser Wilhelm Society – forerunner of the

present-day Max Planck Society – was founded in 1911 and established several institutes in Dahlem. A dynamic group of scientists, including Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and Werner Heisenberg, carried out pioneering research resulting in numerous Nobel Prizes. Since its foundation, Freie Universität has been using buildings that formerly belonged to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, while also paving the way for numerous architecturally innovative buildings.



Otto Hahn, Lise Meitner, and Fritz Straßmann all conducted research in this building. This is where nuclear fission was first observed thanks to their rigorous scientific work. Today the Hahn-Meitner Building is home to the Institute of Biochemistry at Freie Universität.

PHOTO: BERND WANNENMACHER

A DRIVING FORCE AND TOP PERFORMER

The years 1968, 1990, and 2007 are milestones in the history of Freie Universität Berlin. It was an important focal point of the student protest movement in the 1960s and contributed to greater openness, equality, and democracy in society. German unification in 1990 sparked a series of restructuring and improvement measures here. By placing an emphasis on specific cross-disciplinary research areas, the university managed to increase its research performance considerably. With the highest number of approved funding applications in the German Excellence Initiative, Freie Universität Berlin became one of Germany's "Universities of Excellence" in 2007. In 2012 it succeeded in defending this title in the second round of the Excellence competition. It received the title again through the Excellence Strategy in 2019 as a member of the Berlin University Alliance together with Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin.



A range of specialist subjects from the fields of history and cultural studies are based at the "Holzlaube" building.

PHOTO: BERND WANNENMACHER



The Main Tropical Greenhouse at Freie Universität's Botanic Garden is one of the largest of its kind in the world, attracting 300,000 visitors every year.

FOTO: CHRISTIANE PATIĆ

FACTS AND FIGURES

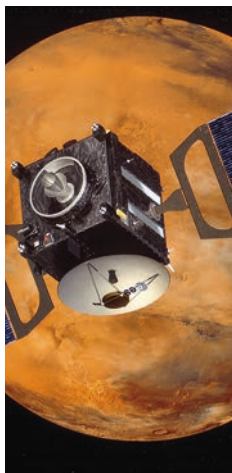
Founded: 1948 | **Students:** approx. 33,500 | **Doctoral researchers:** approx. 4,000 | **Professorships:** approx. 460, of which around 50 are joint professorships carried out with non-university research institutions; just under 80 tenured professorships | **Employees:** approx. 4,660 | **Degree programs:** approx. 170 | **Doctoral programs:** approx. 50 | **Collaborative Research Centers:** 10 hosted by Freie Universität; 13 in which Freie Universität is involved; 6 at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin | **Departments and central institutes:** 11 departments; 1 joint medical faculty with Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin; 4 central institutes

VARIETY IN SUBJECT AREAS AND RESEARCH

The Dahlem Humanities Center at Freie Universität Berlin is home to the broadest spectrum of humanities research in Germany. One of its unique features is the large number of specialized subjects on offer, such as Ancient Near Eastern studies and Jewish studies, plus area studies with specializations ranging from North America, Latin America, and Eastern Europe to East Asia, the Middle East, and various individual European countries. The Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science is the largest political science institute in Germany. Additional areas of research at Freie Universität Berlin include physics, mathematics, and computer science, as well as the life sciences and Earth sciences. The range of subjects also covers veterinary medicine – Freie Universität is one of only five sites in Germany offering veterinary education and training. Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin is the joint medical faculty of Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Freie Universität Berlin is one of the best research universities in Germany.

PHOTO: ESA/DLR, DAVID AUSSERHOFFER, UNIVERSITÄTSARCHIV



EXCELLENCE IN GERMANY AND ABROAD



Freie Universität's Philological Library has excellent facilities for both students and researchers. It contains hundreds of thousands of printed volumes.

PHOTO: PETER HIMSEL

Around 33,500 students are enrolled in approximately 170 degree programs across the university. The centrally located Student Services Center is the first point of contact for advice and support when it comes to studying at Freie Universität Berlin. There are several mentoring programs in place to support students at all stages of their studies. Exchange programs for students have always played an important role at Freie Universität. In the 1950s, Freie Universität had already established partnerships with leading American universities such as Stanford, Princeton, and Columbia, as well as with Western European universities. Today, Freie Universität has more than 400 university partnerships within the Erasmus+ mobility network (Europe and worldwide). The university's various departments and research institutes themselves have over 75 partner agreements with other institutions. Early-career researchers are supported in structured doctoral programs organized by the Dahlem Research School.

CAREER AND ENTERPRISE

The Career Service and the “general professional skills” courses on offer across Freie Universität’s bachelor’s degree programs help prepare students for the workplace. In addition, the university encourages its students, researchers, and alumni to found their own businesses. A start-up center on campus offers workspaces, as well as advice and support, for budding entrepreneurs. This has led to the founding of numerous successful companies, from spin-offs in information technology and the natural sciences to mental health services, just to name a few. Freie Universität has been the recipient of various employer awards, including awards for the introduction of environmental protection measures and for the exemplary facilitation of equal opportunities at work. The Dual Career and Family Service offers support to employees and students in balancing the responsibilities of family and professional life. Freie Universität employees also have access to various offers and services aimed at promoting occupational health.

A number of research projects have resulted in new business ideas, and Freie Universität is here to help.

PHOTO: BERND WANNENMACHER



OPEN TO BERLIN AND THE WORLD



Freie Universität Berlin offers a special program for children during the Long Night of the Sciences.

PHOTO: ROLF SCHULTEN

Researchers at Freie Universität Berlin regularly open their institutes, laboratories, and libraries to the public, for example, during the Long Night of the Sciences or open house days. The Center for Cooperation with Schools also organizes various activities for schoolchildren. These include a children's university and a summer school with many activities in the NatLab and Phys-Lab, special labs for schoolchildren and adolescents. Lectures on a variety of topics, as well as courses in the Guest Auditor Card Program, are open to the public. Freie Universität Berlin also confers honorary doctorates on outstanding individuals from Germany and abroad. These include winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Orhan Pamuk and Imre Kertész, as well as other prominent figures such as the author Salman Rushdie and author and Holocaust survivor Margot Friedländer. The university has several visiting professorships that bring national and international writers to campus to teach for a semester. Their inaugural lectures are usually open to the public.

DEPARTMENTS

- ▶ Biology, Chemistry, Pharmacy
- ▶ Business and Economics
- ▶ Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, the medical school jointly operated by Freie Universität and Humboldt-Universität
- ▶ Earth Sciences
- ▶ Education and Psychology
- ▶ History and Cultural Sciences
- ▶ Law
- ▶ Mathematics and Computer Science
- ▶ Philosophy and Humanities
- ▶ Physics
- ▶ Political and Social Sciences
- ▶ Veterinary Medicine

CENTRAL INSTITUTES

- ▶ Dahlem School of Education
- ▶ Institute for Eastern European Studies
- ▶ Institute for Latin American Studies
- ▶ John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies

Legal Notice

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