



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

# Wissenschaft weltoffen

Facts and Figures on the International Nature of  
Studies and Research in Germany and Worldwide

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**2021**

## 2.3 Applicants

Around half of all international students in Germany are enrolled at universities that are members of uni-assist. Therefore, it is possible to calculate data on international applicants at these universities. There was a significant drop of around 10% in the number of applicants in the 2020 academic year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Compared to the previous year, the number of applicants fell by 68% to the level of 2012. As in 2019, most applicants were from India (15%), followed by China (8%), Syria and Iran (5% each). In the previous year, Syria was still the second most important country of origin for international applicants with 9%. In 16 of the 20 key countries of origin, the number of applicants has decreased compared to the previous year, with decreases ranging from 1% (Russia) to 44% (Syria). That said, the decline in Syrian applicants is not surprising as there had already been a 23% decline previous year, before the Covid-19 pandemic began. A large proportion of the Syrians who fled to Germany in 2015 and 2016 and were interested in studying seem to have arrived in the German higher education system, which is why the number of applicants from Syria is now steadily decreasing.

Compared to the previous year, the group of the 20 key countries of origin is unchanged, only the ranking of individual countries has changed slightly. Just four of the 20 most important countries of origin saw an increase in the number of applicants compared to 2019; these include China (+0.1%), the USA (+2%), Turkey (+11%) and Bangladesh (+25%). It is also noticeable that within the 20

### What is uni-assist?

uni-assist is a registered association, which all state universities in Germany can join. Currently, 158 universities make use of uni-assist's services. The core task of uni-assist is to evaluate international certificates. On behalf of its member universities, uni-assist checks whether the certificates submitted are equivalent to German school-leaving certificates or university degrees and are sufficient to qualify students to study in Germany. If the outcome of the check is positive, uni-assist forwards the application electronically to the respective universities.

key countries, significant declines can mainly be seen in countries from the Africa and Middle East region; in addition to the already mentioned Syria, these are, for example, Nigeria (-16%), Morocco (-18%), Cameroon (-19%), Ghana (-24%) and Tunisia (-26%). Beyond that, Pakistan (-34%) and Vietnam (-26%) also record a particularly strong decrease in the number of applicants.

There are clear differences between the key countries of origin of applicants in terms of success rates in the formal application process through uni-assist. Only applications that meet all formal criteria are forwarded to the respective university by uni-assist for the final decision on student admission. This final decision is then primarily based on academic grades. Among the 20 key countries

of origin in the 2020 academic year, the percentage of applications forwarded by uni-assist ranges from about 77% for applicants from Ghana to about 92% for applicants from Vietnam.

The key reasons for uni-assist rejecting an application are: incomplete documents (29%), insufficient German language proficiency (21%), falling below a specified minimum grade (11%) and exceeding deadlines (11%). Depending on the country of origin, however, the significance of the reasons for rejection varies somewhat. For example, incomplete documents are more likely than average to lead to rejection of applications from Nigeria. Applicants

### \* Footnotes

1 An academic year includes the summer semester and the following winter semester. Accordingly, the 2020 academic year includes applications for the 2020 summer semester and the 2020/21 winter semester.

2 Deviations from 100% are due to rounding.

B2.7 Key countries of origin of international applicants via uni-assist, in 2019 and 2020, with change from 2019 to 2020<sup>1</sup>

Country of origin	Proportion in %		Comparison 2019 vs 2020 in %
	2019	2020	
India	14.4	15.2	-5.0
China	6.9	7.6	0.1
Syria	8.5	5.2	-44.3
Iran	4.6	4.8	-5.8
Turkey	3.8	4.7	10.8
Nigeria	4.4	4.1	-15.5
Bangladesh	2.6	3.6	24.6
Pakistan	4.9	3.6	-33.9
Russia	2.6	2.9	-0.6
Egypt	2.6	2.7	-6.7
Cameroon	2.7	2.4	-18.7
Morocco	2.5	2.3	-18.1
Indonesia	1.7	1.8	-7.4
US	1.6	1.8	1.8
Tunisia	2.0	1.7	-25.9
South Korea	1.4	1.5	-4.4
Ukraine	1.6	1.5	-17.2
Vietnam	1.7	1.4	-26.4
Ghana	1.4	1.2	-24.3
Columbia	1.1	1.1	-7.3
<b>All countries</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-9.9</b>

Sources: uni-assist; DAAD calculations

B2.8 Forwarding rate of international applications via uni-assist, by selected countries of origin, in 2020<sup>1</sup>

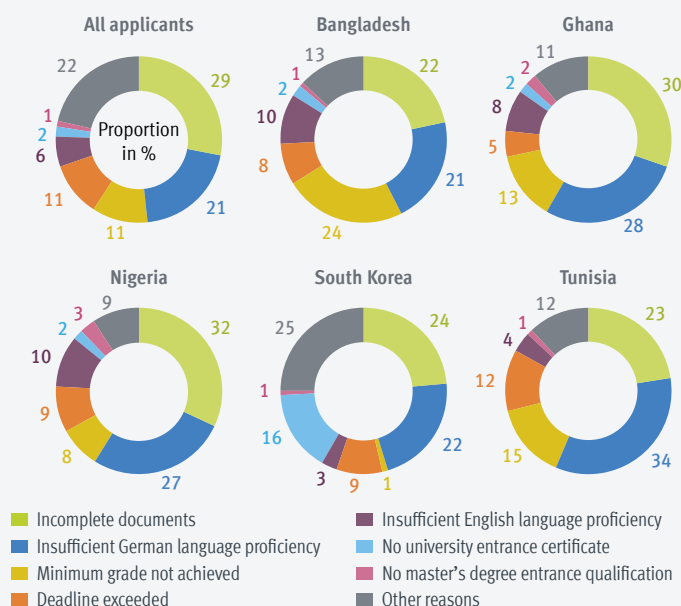
Country of origin	Forwarding rate in %
Vietnam	92
Bangladesh	91
Russia	89
Ukraine	88
Tunisia	88
Indonesia	87
China	87
Turkey	87
Syria	86
Iran (Islamic Republic)	86
India	86
Nepal	85
Morocco	84
Pakistan	84
South Korea	81
Egypt	81
Cameroon	80
Nigeria	79
Jordan	77
Ghana	77

Sources: uni-assist; DAAD calculations

from Tunisia, Ghana and Nigeria are rejected at above-average levels due to inadequate German language skills. Other above-average rates of rejection concern failing to reach a specified minimum grade in the case of applicants from Bangladesh and Tunisia, and inadequate English language proficiency for applicants from Bangladesh and Nigeria. Moreover, common reasons for rejection among key countries of origin include lacking a university entrance certificate, which particularly affects applicants from South Korea (16%), the US (11%) and Egypt (5%), and lacking a master's degree entrance qualification in the case of Cameroon (5%).

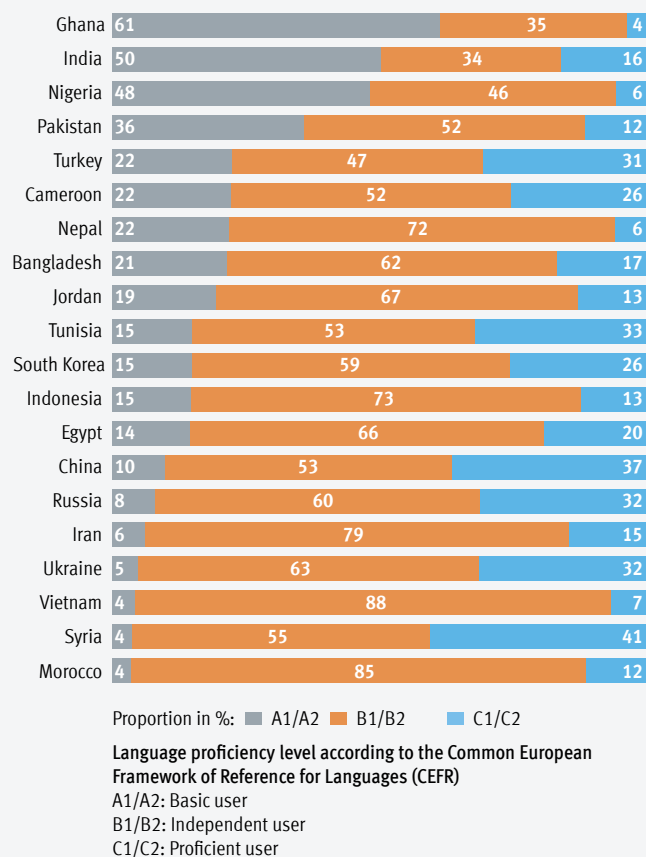
There are also clear differences between the 20 key countries of origin concerning the German language skills evaluated in the uni-assist application process. In the 2020 academic year, the highest proportion of applicants who are proficient German language users (C1/C2), according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), are from Syria (41%), China (37%) and Tunisia (33%). High percentages of applicants at an intermediate language skill level (B1/B2) come from Vietnam (88%), Morocco (85%) and Iran (79%). Finally, the highest share of applicants with only a basic command of German (A1/A2) is to be found among applicants from Ghana (61%).

B2.9 Key formal reasons for rejection of international applications via uni-assist, total and by selected countries of origin, in 2020<sup>1,2</sup>



Sources: uni-assist; DAAD calculations

B2.10 German language skills of international applicants via uni-assist, by selected countries of origin, in 2020<sup>1,2</sup>



Sources: uni-assist; DAAD calculations