

1 | How Germany's visa & residence system is structured

Stage	What it is	Key facts
Schengen "C" visa	Short-stay sticker (up to 90 days in any 180-day period)	No work allowed except very narrow exceptions (e.g. conferences). Not relevant for a PhD contract.
National "D" visa	Entry visa for stays > 90 days (work, study, research, family, etc.)	Issued by the German embassy/consulate responsible for your <i>current</i> place of residence before you travel. Valid for 3–6 months, single or multiple entry. Auswärtiges Amt
Residence permit	Plastic ID card (eAT) issued <i>inside Germany</i> by the local Ausländerbehörde	You must convert the D-visa into the correct residence permit within the first 90 days after arrival. Auswärtiges Amt
Main residence-permit categories for researchers/PhD candidates	§ 18d AufenthG "Researcher" (hosting agreement / employment contract), § 16b "Doctoral studies" (student status) or EU-Blue-Card (high salary)	§ 18d is tailor-made when you are employed by a German university or institute, so approval from the Federal Employment Agency is <i>waived</i> and the family-reunification and mobility rules are generous. Germany.info

2 | Translating that to *your* situation ("Binh")

Your facts	Why it matters
100 % research-assistant contract (Entgeltgruppe E13/1) + PhD plan	Qualifies you for a § 18d Researcher national visa (not a student visa).
Employer already passed internal "Export Control" & BA approval isn't needed for researchers	The visa section can decide after it has consulted the local Ausländerbehörde; that usually shortens processing.
Current place of residence: Espoo/Helsinki, Finland (non-EU passport holder)	You <i>must</i> apply at the German Embassy in Helsinki ; you <i>cannot</i> apply in Germany or by post. German Embassy Helsinki

Start date options: **01 Jul 2025** (preferred), 15 Jul or 01 Aug 2025

Helsinki mission advises submitting the file only when it is complete and quotes 4-8 weeks for most long-stay visas. Count backwards: apply no later than early May for a 1 July start. A mid-July / 1 Aug start adds a safety cushion for processing, finding a flat and collecting the visa. [German Embassy Helsinki](#)

3 | Step-by-step guide: National-visa application *from Helsinki*

Tip: The embassy's visa pages are in English *and* Finnish. Open the links in a desktop browser; many sub-pages are PDF check-lists.

1. **Collect the documents exactly as on the Helsinki checklist “Working in Germany”.**
Originals + 2 photocopies in A4:

- Passport (≥ 6 months validity & issued < 10 years ago)
- Finnish residence-permit card
- Finnish *residence certificate* (DVV)
- 2 biometric photos
- **Employment contract** / or a signed “Aufnahmevereinbarung” (hosting agreement)
- Employer's declaration *Erklärung zum Beschäftigungsverhältnis* (they fill it, you bring it)
- Academic degree + **anabin** print-outs confirming recognition
- CV, motivation letter (optional but helps)
- Travel health-insurance covering the gap until German statutory insurance starts (€30 000 min.)
- Proof of accommodation in Germany (temporary hotel/Airbnb is OK)
- Visa fee € 75 (card or cash)
(Full checklist on embassy site) [German Embassy Helsinki](#)

2. **Fill in the VIDEX online application**

Select “Employment / Scientific researcher (§ 18d)” → print the form + barcode pages.

(Accessible via the “Fill in application form here” link in the same checklist page.)
[German Embassy Helsinki](#)

3. Book your appointment

- Go to the embassy’s **appointment portal** (“Book an appointment”) and choose “**National visa – Employment / Research**”. Times are released in rolling windows; refresh daily if the calendar is grey. You’ll receive an e-mail confirmation with a cancellation link. [German Embassy Helsinki](#)

4. Attend the appointment in person (Keskuskatu 6, 00100 Helsinki)

- Bring **all** documents in the order of the checklist; no staples.
- Provide fingerprints and pay the fee.
- Processing then happens in Berlin & the local Ausländerbehörde. The embassy will e-mail you only if extra documents are required and when the visa is ready for pick-up. [German Embassy Helsinki](#)[German Embassy Helsinki](#)

5. Processing time: 4–8 weeks is typical for researchers; it can be shorter, but plan for the longer end. You can’t track the file, so avoid “status” e-mails. [German Embassy Helsinki](#)

6. Collect the visa & travel

- The D-visa sticker usually gives 90 days’ validity and permits multiple entries.
- Arrange long-term housing; many landlords accept a copy of the visa + contract as proof of income.

7. After arrival in Germany (within first 2 weeks)

- *Meldeadresse*: register your address at the Bürgeramt / Einwohnermeldeamt.
 - Take that certificate + contract + passport to a statutory health-insurance fund; membership starts retroactively to day 1 of the employment contract.
 - Book an appointment at the local **Ausländerbehörde** to convert the entry visa into a § 18d residence-permit card (bring biometrics, contract, Meldebescheinigung, insurance proof). Processing normally takes 4–6 weeks; the Fiktionsbescheinigung you receive acts as proof meanwhile.
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4 | Practical timing suggestions for 01 Jul / 15 Jul / 01 Aug

Target start date	Latest safe visa-appointment date in Helsinki	Comment
01 Jul 2025	Early May 2025	Requires immediate action (collect docs this week, book the next free slot). Consider temporary accommodation/housing search done online.
15 Jul 2025	Mid-May 2025	Gives ~2 extra weeks; still comfortable if you secure an appointment soon.
01 Aug 2025	Late May / early June	Safest if you expect delays (e.g. translation, degree recognition, family joining).

5 | Useful official resources at a glance

What you need	Where to click
Embassy visa overview & checklists	<i>Visa Information in English</i> page – see checklist “Documents required for working in Germany”. German Embassy Helsinki
Appointment portal	<i>Book an appointment</i> button on the embassy <i>Ajanvaraus</i> page. German Embassy Helsinki
Online application (VIDEX)	Link “fill in the application form here” inside the checklist. German Embassy Helsinki
Research-visa legal basis	§ 18d AufenthG factsheet (Federal Foreign Office PDF). Germany.info
General researcher immigration guide	<i>Make-it-in-Germany</i> – “Visa for research”. Make It In Germany

Final tip

Finish any pending translations/degree-recognition print-outs first, *then* grab the earliest appointment you see. If you later realise you won't be ready, you can cancel and re-book without penalty – that keeps the calendar fair for everyone.

Good luck with the paperwork and welcome to German academia!

Von: Yuan Yanglang <yanglang.yuan@aalto.fi>
Gesendet: Montag, 19. Mai 2025 09:42
An: Köster, Marion <marion.koester@ibf.rwth-aachen.de>
Betreff: RE: Employment as a research assistant / IBF

Dear Marion,

Thanks for your kind help. I am preparing the last several required documents right now. Could you please help me figure out this file (Declaration on the implementation of an accelerated procedure for skilled workers in accordance with Section 81a Aufenthaltsgesetz (German Residence Act))? Maybe I can fill the first or second one? If it is possible, could you please kindly tell me the Responsible immigration authority? Thanks again.

All the best,

Yanglang Yuan

From: Dez. 2.0 HiWi-Welcome <welcome@rwth-aachen.de>
Sent: Monday, May 19, 2025 11:03
To: 'Köster, Marion' <marion.koester@ibf.rwth-aachen.de>; Yuan Yanglang <yanglang.yuan@aalto.fi>
Subject: AW: Employment as a research assistant / IBF

Dear Mr. Yanglang Yuan,

Mrs. Köster kindly forwarded your mail to the Welcome Center and I hereby like to answer as follows: Unfortunately, RWTH Aachen University does not currently offer support for the accelerated specialist procedure in accordance with Section 81a.

You must therefore contact the embassy and apply for your visa for the purpose of employment at RWTH Aachen University. It may be possible to apply for a [Blue Card for researchers](#) via an accelerated procedure. Please note that we cannot and are not allowed to give you advice on which visa you should apply for. This depends on what you will exactly do here in Aachen. The German embassy will decide which visa will be issued for you based on the information you give them. **Of special importance is the invitation letter**, which you receive from the Institute of RWTH Aachen University you will be working at. Please make sure, that in this invitation you find detailed information about your position, like period of employment, possible extension of employment, info about gross wage and salary class....

Furthermore, please prepare a Hosting Agreement and request that it is signed and stamped by Human Resources (if you will sign an employment contract) or by your RWTH host institute (if your stay will be funded by other means). The Hosting Agreement is oftentimes requested in your visa application as well. Find a [template of the Hosting Agreement on the website of the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees](#). Getting an appointment for a visa application might take several months. So please let this be your topmost priority. Find a [comparative overview of the different residence titles in the German Residence Act](#) on the website of the German Rector's Conference.

Please let me know, if you have further questions,

Kind regards,

Andrea