

Humboldt Rankings

Anyone attempting to draw up a list of the best research institutions in Germany is faced with a difficult problem: What are the right indicators for measuring the academic quality and attractiveness of a location reliably and comparatively? Nowadays, you can pave the road with rankings. And there are almost as many indicators, too. Points evaluated include publication output, the number of citations or the amount of third-party funding raised. Colleagues have to assess a researcher's reputation, or students are asked how satisfied they are with their professors. This does not reveal much about how attractive German research institutions are by international comparison. In spite of all the noises made about internationalising German science, the actual number of foreign guest academics hardly plays a role, if any at all, in the most influential rankings in public journals or even in any of the other surveys. The Humboldt Rankings help to close this gap. The sole indicator is the number of research stays undertaken by fellows and award winners sponsored by the Foundation at German research institutions. Between 2004 and 2008, Humboldtians took part in 5,128 extended research stays in Germany. Every stay is the result of a decision to select a host and research partner in Germany and makes statements about just how attractive Germany is in general for cutting-edge researchers from abroad; about the disciplines in which German research is so good that it wins the international contest for the best; and about which German scientists and scholars maintain

particularly intensive international contacts. After all, Humboldtians choose their own hosts and make decisions on the basis of their academic performance and international reputation. On the other hand, they themselves have to convince their partners both of their own value and that of their research project. Hosts and Humboldtians often get together because they have already met each other in the course of previous international exchange. So, being near the top of the Humboldt Rankings is an important indicator for international contacts and reputation.

The Humboldt Rankings differentiate between the four major subject groups: the humanities, law and social sciences; life sciences; natural science and engineering. What are presented here are the front runners, representing roughly half of all the stays per subject group in the period 2004 to 2008. In the humanities, law and the social sciences these top 50% are concentrated on nine out of 139 host institutions; in the life sciences 22 out of 135; in natural science 22 out of a total of 166 and in engineering 13 out of a total of 106. A complete list of all the host institutions can be found in Table 16 in the appendix to this report. With regard to the fellows, every research stay lasting at least three months was counted, with regard to the award winners, every stay lasting at least one month. If an Humboldtian visited the same institution more than once during the period covered, this only counted as one stay. Allocation to one of the four subject groups was undertaken according to guest academic, not guest institution.

Host institutions according to subject group

Life Sciences (2004 to 2008)

Ranking	Institution	Stays fellows	Stays award winners	Total stays
1	Munich University	34	4	38
2	TUM (Technische Universität München)	22	7	29
3	Freiburg University	20	6	26
4	Humboldt University Berlin*	21	4	25
	Göttingen University	22	3	25
	Heidelberg University	21	4	25
5	Freie Universität Berlin*	17	5	22
	Würzburg University	14	8	22
6	Bonn University	19	1	20
7	Tübingen University	15	3	18
8	EMBL Heidelberg – European Molecular Biology Laboratory	14	3	17
9	German Cancer Research Centre (DKFZ), Heidelberg	12	2	14
	Giessen University	13	1	14
10	MPI of Cell Biology and Genetics, Dresden	9	4	13
	Hohenheim University	13		13
11	Frankfurt am Main University	8	4	12
	Cologne University	7	5	12
12	Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC), Berlin	5	6	11
	MPI of Molecular Plant Physiology, Potsdam	9	2	11
	Hamburg University	11		11
13	Helmholtz Centre Munich– German Research Centre for Environmental Health, Neuherberg	10		10
	TU Dresden	8	2	10

* For technical reasons stays at the Charité are currently ascribed to Humboldt University Berlin which may influence the position of Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt University Berlin in the rankings.

Continuation: Host institutions according to subject group

Humanities, Law and Social Sciences (2004 to 2008)

Ranking	Institution	Stays fellows	Stays award winners	Total stays
1	Freie Universität Berlin	113	12	125
2	Humboldt University Berlin	106	14	120
3	Munich University	95	14	109
4	Cologne University	55	7	62
5	Bonn University	50	5	55
6	Freiburg University	51	3	54
7	Heidelberg University	46	6	52
8	Tübingen University	41	10	51
9	Frankfurt am Main University	34	2	36

Engineering (2004 to 2008)

Ranking	Institution	Stays fellows	Stays award winners	Total stays
1	TU Darmstadt	30	7	37
2	RWTH Aachen	28	1	29
	Stuttgart University	25	4	29
3	TUM (Technische Universität München)	15	9	24
4	TU Berlin	16	4	20
5	Karlsruhe University (TH)	14	5	19
6	Erlangen-Nürnberg University	13	4	17
7	MPI for Metals Research, Stuttgart	10	6	16
8	German Aerospace Centre (DLR), Cologne	11	2	13
	Bochum University	11	2	13
	Hanover University	13		13
9	TU Hamburg-Harburg	10	1	11
10	Karlsruhe Research Centre (FZK)	6	4	10

Natural Science (2004 to 2008)

Ranking	Institution	Stays fellows	Stays award winners	Total stays
1	TUM (Technische Universität München)	76	29	105
2	Munich University	67	32	99
3	Heidelberg University	65	21	86
4	Bonn University	57	21	78
5	Freie Universität Berlin*	40	27	67
	Erlangen-Nürnberg University	56	11	67
6	Humboldt University Berlin*	42	24	66
7	RWTH Aachen	49	11	60
8	Bochum University	43	16	59
9	Göttingen University	44	14	58
10	Fritz Haber Institute in the MPG, Berlin	31	25	56
11	Münster University	42	13	55
12	Frankfurt am Main University	37	16	53
13	Karlsruhe University (TH)	36	16	52
14	Stuttgart University	34	11	45
15	Würzburg University	36	7	43
16	TU Berlin	23	18	41
17	Jülich Research Centre (FZJ)	27	13	40
	Bayreuth University	26	14	40
	Hamburg University	26	14	40
18	Bielefeld University	23	14	37
19	MPI for Polymer Research, Mainz	31	5	36

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