

ISO Buddy/Mentor Guide

University of Hohenheim

Welcome to the ISO Buddy Program!

As a mentor, you play a crucial role in helping international students settle into life at Hohenheim and in Stuttgart.



Dear Mentors,

First of all, thank you very much for your commitment. Without your support, this program would not be possible. We hope that this experience will offer you valuable intercultural insights and that, by the end of the semester, you will feel proud of having guided international students through the challenges of German bureaucracy and contributed to making their stay in Hohenheim truly memorable. Each Mentor team consists of two Mentors supporting up to three international students. Please work closely with your co-Mentor and communicate clearly to ensure that all students receive the support they need. Make sure to contact your assigned students as soon as you receive their contact details. If a student does not respond within a week, feel free to reach out to us. Some students may reply with a delay due to holidays or travel.

One of your first tasks is to coordinate the students' arrival times. If you are unable to pick a student up from the airport or train station, please try to arrange for a friend or family member to assist. If this is not possible, contact us directly at iso.buddy@uni-hohenheim.de. Please be aware that welcoming and picking up international students is one of the most important responsibilities of the Mentor program, and it can be quite challenging for us to find replacements at short notice.

Kindly follow the guide provided on the following pages. If you encounter any problems or need assistance, do not hesitate to contact us at iso.buddy@uni-hohenheim.de.

We wish you all an amazing semester and look forward to seeing you at one of our events!

Best wishes,
Your ISO Mentor Team

Your Responsibilities as a Mentor

Before Arrival

- **Contact the other mentor/partner** and coordinate together!
- **Make initial contact** with your buddies via email or WhatsApp
- **Introduce yourself** and offer to answer questions about Hohenheim, Stuttgart, and Germany
- **Share the Welcome to Hohenheim WhatsApp group link**
- **Ask about arrival plans** (date, time, airport/train station) and offer to meet them, if you are available!
- **If needed, help with accommodation search** by sharing housing resources and tips, remember not to stress about it, and always ask for help from the ISO team or refer them to the official websites.
Just being there for them can also be huge support!

First Week: Practical Support

- **Meet your buddies in person** upon arrival at airport, train station, or on campus
- **Help with move-in** to dorm or shared accommodation if needed
- **Accompany them to important appointments:**
 - Bürgerbüro (city registration) - Filderhauptstraße 155, Plieningen-Birkach
 - Opening a German bank account (BW Bank, Volksbank, Deutsche Bank, Commerzbank)
 - Office of International Affairs if they have questions
 - Health insurance activation or questions
- **Give practical tips for daily life:**
 - Public transport (VVS app, student ID perks and discounts, bus routes to campus)
 - Supermarkets and stores (Edeka, Penny, dm) - remind them stores close on Sundays!
 - Cell phone/SIM cards (Aldi Talk, Lidl Connect, prepaid options)
 - Internet setup in dorm (ethernet cable)
 - Cultural norms and useful German phrases

Throughout the Semester: Social Integration

- **Include them in student social life:**
 - ISO events and meet-ups
 - Parties (TMS), cooking together, movie nights
 - Excursions around Stuttgart and Baden-Württemberg
 - Cafés, pubs, and local hangouts
 - Student groups (AKN, Cafete, Kulturgruppe, etc.)

- **Help them get started at university:**
 - Campus orientation and building locations
 - Course registration (Basis, emailing lecturers)
 - Library card and study spaces
 - Mensa and cafeteria (charging student ID, daily menu)
 - Unisport registration
 - Exam procedures and deadlines
- **Be available for ongoing questions** and check in regularly
- **Connect them with other students** and introduce them to your friend groups

Essential Resources to Share with Your Buddies

WhatsApp Groups

Group	Link
Welcome to Hohenheim	https://chat.whatsapp.com/JAakzCi5hacDOUiOWk2e1E
Second-hand stuff	https://chat.whatsapp.com/B6yzo1gSY5lFeMzEnsmQ4e
Accommodations (sublets)	https://chat.whatsapp.com/BfLK9cggPJqD1Deahdq9Yc

Second-Hand Shopping in Stuttgart

Store	Phone	Link
PICKNWEIGHT Vintage Kilo Store	+49 711 48936224	https://g.co/kgs/hs8QfwP
FAIRKAUF Secondhand-Kaufhaus	+49 711 657060	https://g.co/kgs/yqLxF2F

Key Locations Near Campus

Category	Locations
Supermarkets	EDEKA (Wollgrasweg 23), PENNY (Birkheckenstrae 4), Netto (Filderhauptstraße 49)
Drug stores	dm (Kirchheimer Str. 128), dm (Epplestraße 6), Müller (Herrenberger Str. 4)
Banks	BW Bank (Filderhauptstraße 155), Volksbank Plieningen (Filderhauptstraße 48), Volksbank Birkach (Birkheckenstrae 3)
Pharmacies	Garben-Apotheke (Wollgrasweg 17), Birken-Apotheke (Birkheckenstrae 8)
Doctors (GP)	Dr. Strobel (Wollgrasweg 17), Dr. Ilg (Birkheckenstrae 4), Dr. Gerst (Birkheckenstrae 11)

Transport Tips

- **DB app** for long distance transportation and **Deutschlandticket**
- **VVS app:** Digital tickets are cheaper (€2.65 vs €2.80)
- **Airport to Hohenheim:** Bus 65 (direct, ~15 min)
- **Hohenheim to City Center:** U3 from Plieningen Garbe, or Degerloch or Ruhbank
- **Night bus N8:** Returns from Schlossplatz to Hohenheim after midnight
- **Info:** www.vvs.de or www.uni-hohenheim.de/en/vvs-student-ticket

Important Campus Contacts

Office	Contact
ISO	iso.uni-hohenheim.de, @iso.hohenheim (Instagram)
Office of International Affairs	internationals@ua.uni-hohenheim.de, Fruwirthstr. 12, Tue 10-12, Wed 1-3 (Zoom)
Student Information Center (SIZ)	siz@verwaltung.uni-hohenheim.de, Palace West Wing Room 033-036
Housing (Studierendenwerk)	info.hoh@sw-tuebingen-hohenheim.de, Kirchnerstr. 5, +49 711 459-22781
Student Counseling (ZSB)	zsb@uni-hohenheim.de, Emil-Wolff-Str. 14, WhatsApp +49 1522 6247075
Psychotherapeutic Counseling (PBS)	terminland.de/pbs-hohenheim (online appointments)
IT Help Desk (KIM)	kim-it@uni-hohenheim.de, +49 711 459-24444, Garbenstr. 30 Bio 1
AStA (Student Committee)	vs.uni-hohenheim.de/en/asta

Emergency Numbers

- **Emergency services/Fire:** 112
- **Police:** 110
- **Medical on-call (non-emergency):** 116117 (24/7)

Tips for Being a Great Buddy

Communication

- **Respond promptly** to messages, especially in the first weeks
- **Be proactive** - don't wait for them to ask, offer help and invitations
- **Use simple language** if their German/English is limited
- **Be patient** with cultural differences and questions that seem obvious to you

Cultural Sensitivity

- **Understand culture shock is real** - homesickness and adjustment challenges are normal
- **Be open-minded** about different customs, food preferences, and social norms
- **Explain German customs** that might be confusing (e.g., Sunday store closures, cash preference, recycling rules)
- **Share your perspective** on German culture but acknowledge it's just one view

Practical Support

- **Walk through processes once** rather than just explaining - accompany them to Bürgerbüro, show them how to validate student ID, etc.
- **Share your favorite spots** - your go-to café, best Döner place, nice walking routes
- **Introduce them to your friends** - expanding their network helps them feel at home
- **Invite them to regular activities** - weekly volleyball, movie nights, cooking sessions

Boundaries

- **Set realistic expectations** about your availability from the start
- **You're a mentor, not a 24/7 service** - it's okay to have boundaries
- **Refer to professionals** when needed - for serious issues (visa problems, mental health, academic difficulties), direct them to Office of International Affairs, ZSB, or PBS
- **Take care of yourself** - being a mentor should be rewarding, not overwhelming

Buddy Program Timeline

Week -2 to -1 (Before Arrival)

- Receive buddies assignment from ISO
- Send welcome email/message
- Share WhatsApp groups and useful links
- Coordinate arrival meeting

Week 1 (Arrival Week)

- Meet in person
- Help with immediate needs (accommodation, SIM card, groceries)
- Attend Welcome Week events together
- Accompany to Bürgerbüro and bank

Week 2-4 (Settling In)

- Campus orientation and course registration
- Introduce to student groups and social activities
- Check in regularly (2-3 times per week)
- Include in social plans
- Most international students will start to feel overwhelmed at this point, *let them know they are not alone!*

Month 2+ (Integration Phase)

- Continue regular contact (1-2 times per week)
- Invite to group activities and events
- Support with any ongoing questions
- Help them build their own social network

End of Semester

- Attend ISO farewell event together
- Help with departure formalities if needed (de-registration, move-out)
- Exchange contact info to stay in touch!

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my buddies doesn't respond or seems uninterested?

Some students are more independent or prefer to figure things out themselves. Send a friendly check-in message and let them know you're available if they need anything. Don't take it personally - focus your energy on those who are more engaged.

What if I can't answer a question?

It's okay not to know everything! Help them find the answer by looking it up together, directing them to the Welcome Brochure, or suggesting they contact the relevant office (International Affairs, SIZ, etc.).

What if there's a serious problem (visa issues, health emergency, harassment)?

Refer them immediately to professional support:

- Visa/legal: Office of International Affairs (internationals@ua.uni-hohenheim.de)
- Health/mental health: PBS (terminland.de/pbs-hohenheim) or emergency services (112)
- Academic issues: ZSB (zsb@uni-hohenheim.de)
- Harassment/discrimination: AStA or university counseling services

Always inform ISO coordinators if a serious issue arises.

How much time commitment is expected?

Most intensive in the first 2-3 weeks, after that, it is more relaxed and focused on social activities and check-ins. Adjust based on your schedule and buddies needs.

Can I be matched with multiple buddies?

Yes, ISO may assign you 1-3 mentees depending on availability. Let coordinators know your capacity.

Additional Resources

- [Welcome Brochure \(comprehensive guide\)](#)
- **ISO Website:** iso.uni-hohenheim.de
- **Instagram:** @iso.hohenheim, @news4internationalshohenheim
- **News4Internationals Podcast:** Stories and tips for international students
- **University Info:** www.uni-hohenheim.de/en/international
- **Buddy Program Contact:** internationals@ua.uni-hohenheim.de

Thank you for being an ISO Buddy! Your support makes a real difference in helping international students feel welcome and succeed at Hohenheim.

*ISO - International Students Organization
University of Hohenheim
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