

MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS AT FU-BEST



MENTAL WELL-BEING DURING STUDY ABROAD

Mental health is just as or at least as important as physical health. During study abroad, mental well-being (or unwell-being) affects the ability to learn and enjoy one's experience; and it also strongly affects one's physical well-being.

We understand mental health as the ability to cope with the emotional and cognitive experiences of life and with certain (academic or other) **stress experiences**. This stress may result from acute events or situations, or more generally from a personal state that causes a heightened stress level (e.g., a learning disability). To a certain extent, such stress is "normal" and one can cope with it; but at some point, the usual coping strategies might not work anymore or simply not be enough. If (academic or other) stress results from a learning disability, **learning accommodations** might be a supplemental strategy to reduce this stress. If the stress results from an acute situation or a pre-existing psychological condition, **mental health support/counseling** can be employed to help students cope with and reduce this stress.

LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS AT FU-BEST

We work very closely with each individual student and our instructors, who are very supportive and usually flexible regarding alternative exam formats etc. The sooner we know what may be challenging for you and how we might assist you reduce academic and/or exam stress, the better we can work with you and let you know how we can support you on-site – or not.

Our aim is to help you assess realistically whether this is the right program for you and to make an informed decision regarding additional support that might be required from other sources.

Contact us as early as you can at info@fubest.fu-berlin.de for an individual talk about learning accommodations that you may require during your semester at FU-BEST. Each conversation is confidential, open and meant to help you.



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT/COUNSELING

Our **team** is available daily for everyday support, accommodations, and "first mental aid".

Our **mental health counselor** Shani St. Louis gives an introduction to mental health during our orientation week, has a check-in meeting at mid-term, and offers weekly online 1:1 sessions to our students by appointment (not a substitute for regular therapy sessions).

We have an **emergency phone** that students can reach 24/7.

For specific, more in-depth, regular, and/or medical treatment (e.g., when medication is involved), we will **refer** you to (English-speaking) doctors/counselors or assist you with setting up a routine involving resources back home (e.g. online counseling at your home school).

WHAT YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF

FU-BEST is an **intensive academic program**. We offer courses in the humanities and social sciences with a relatively high reading and writing workload, and a rather strict attendance policy to ensure an intensive and rewarding study experience.

Consequently, this means that there are certain learning disabilities or chronic illnesses that can be dealt with but simply add a lot of stress to students' daily efforts. For example, a program like ours is very hard for students with dyslexia, or conditions that will lead to frequent absences.

If you have special needs or questions, contact us at info@fubest.fu-berlin.de as soon as possible. Sometimes we need to make inquiries, too, or ask you to provide specific details or documents for more specific assistance.

Please also be prepared that **services** that you might require will **differ from those at home and at your home institutions**, both in scope and in depth. Doctors and counselors, for example, are resources external to FU-BEST, where students compete for appointments with many other people. Academic accommodations have their limits, too. German universities are tax-supported and have fewer resources for personnel (e.g. tutors), but also limited technological offerings.



Berlin is a vibrant, big, and exciting city. There is a lot to explore and discover, but also a large metropolis to navigate. Students very often have ambitious plans to explore not only Berlin, but also Europe, which requires them to plan well regarding their financial and time resources. At the same time, they strive to learn a lot and fulfil their academic obligations back home. Culture shock is common among students and part of the experience, too. All of this may result in stressful situations and the need for added coping strategies.

We have a large group of students each semester, and sometimes we do not detect right away that a student needs more support than it seems just because of the daily buzz around us. Don't be shy and contact us (pro)actively at any time if you think you could do with some help. Our doors are always open.

HOW YOU CAN PREPARE



Medication: Check with your doctor(s) whether what you need is available here or, if not, how much you can bring with you (if at all). Arrange for a doctor's appointment as soon as you are on site. Finding the right substitute can take time, and sometimes doctors will not prescribe anything or only after a consultation and/or a more detailed blood check.

In general, referrals to doctors and/or counselors may take some time. If you can, plan ahead and arrange appointments early on in the semester – perhaps even before you arrive in Berlin. We're happy to help.

Pre-existing conditions (both psychological and physical) are not covered by the insurance students get at FU-BEST, so it might be advisable for you to get (or keep) an insurance that covers treatment at home and abroad.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU!