

# Applying for Exceptional Circumstances (Petition for a “Härtefall”)

## Who Is This Fact Sheet Intended For?

The information below is aimed at prospective RWTH students who have a disability and/or chronic illness. **In particular, it concerns the creation of equivalent admissions conditions for individuals who would be particularly disadvantaged by non-admission.** Approximately 11% of all students in Germany have a disability or chronic illness. This includes, for example, physical disabilities, visual and hearing impairments, but also disabilities or illnesses that are less or even not at all recognizable at first glance, such as mental illnesses (e.g. depression), chronic somatic illnesses, autism spectrum disorder, or even partial performance impairments, for example dyslexia (see best2 Study 2016 of the DSW – German National Association for Student Affairs). Depending on the individual extent of the impairment and the associated social, family, or economic situation, a petition for exceptional circumstances, also referred to as a “Härtefall”, in addition to the usual admission procedure for a place at the University may be recommended.

## Petition for a “Härtefall” or Special Case

Universities in Germany are legally required to ensure that students with disabilities and chronic illnesses are not disadvantaged in their studies or in the application process for a study place. The University reserves 2% of the course of study contingent for students facing particular hardship. The quota for such cases is intended for students who would be exceptionally disadvantaged by an admission rejection. They can submit a petition for a “Härtefall”, special case, at the same time as their regular application for admission for a study place.

**IMPORTANT:** As long as the applicant meets all the admission requirements – and only then – the petition can lead to immediate admission regardless of waiting periods and/or grades.



## VORSCHUB – Representation for Students With Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses

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(Telephone only available during consultation hours)

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You can find our current consultation hours here:

[www.asta.rwth-aachen.de/beratung/behinderung-chronic-illness/](http://www.asta.rwth-aachen.de/beratung/behinderung-chronic-illness/)

 [www.facebook.com/VORSCHUB.RWTH/](https://www.facebook.com/VORSCHUB.RWTH/)



## What Counts as Exceptional Circumstances?

According to the awarding regulations of North Rhine-Westphalia, exceptional circumstances apply if “the applicant’s special social or family reasons render it essential for them to immediately commence their studies or change their place of study.” Not every reason that the applicant considers relevant can be recognized as a “Härtefall” when awarding a study place. The reasons stated must implicate a serious impairment/restriction.

The following cases of disabilities or chronic illnesses may be classified as exceptional circumstances:

1. Applicants with a deteriorating illness
2. Applicants who are restricted in their profession, permitting them only to choose or practice certain occupational fields or requiring them to drop out from previous studies or professional work. As a rule, however, they must expect the intended course of study to lead to successful occupational inclusion. In this case, it would be unreasonably difficult or impossible for them to wait even one more admissions round to commence their studies.
3. Applicants who cannot effectively wait even one more admissions round before starting their studies, however, this reason is only possible in conjunction with other justifications.



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Vertretung für Studierende  
mit Behinderung und  
chronischer Erkrankung  
(VORSCHUB)

**RWTH**AACHEN  
UNIVERSITY

More detailed information can be found at the following links:

<https://www.rwth-aachen.de/go/id/djkz>

<https://www.studentenwerke.de/de/handbuch-studium-behinderung>

The RWTH Registrar's Office and VORSCHUB will be happy to provide you with information and advice on the applications, the specific applicable regulations, and the rights of students with disabilities or chronic illnesses.



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