FAQ for Applicants

TUM: Junge Akademie (TUMJA)

Hint: It might be useful to use Ctrl+F to search what you’re looking for.

Questions about the Application Process ................................................................. 1
Info Events .............................................................................................................. 1
Requirements / Background .................................................................................... 1
Application ............................................................................................................. 2
Selection Days ........................................................................................................ 5
Questions about the Program ................................................................................... 6
General Questions ................................................................................................... 6
Time Management .................................................................................................. 7
Funding & Finance .................................................................................................. 8
Organizational Questions ....................................................................................... 8
Projects & Project Work .......................................................................................... 8
Taskforces ............................................................................................................... 10

Questions about the Application Process

Info Events

Will the slides of the presentation be uploaded?
We will upload them after the event on our website.

Requirements / Background

Can I apply without a nomination?
YES. You will need an additional letter of recommendation, which may be written by a professor, someone running an organization or student initiative you volunteer for, even a former teacher of yours. Keep in mind, however, that their impression of you should be up to date and applicable to the offering of this program.

Do nominated applicants have a better chance of being accepted than non-nominated applicants?
No. We do not prioritize or differentiate between these two groups.
What grades do I need to have? / What if my grades drop after this semester?

Grades are only considered as a last tie breaker in case all other criteria between applicants are identical. We also consider that the average grades between study programs can differ a lot.

The primary focus is your Essay/Video on this year’s call, Letter of Motivation and CV, as well as the Letter of Recommendation, if submitted.

Does it make sense to apply if I have not been accepted as a master’s student yet but have already completed my bachelor's degree?

Yes, if you have reason to assume that you will be accepted eventually. Some people don’t get accepted immediately after their bachelor’s but a semester later. This would also be fine for us.

I only study a minor subject at TUM (30 Credits) but I was nominated. Is that a problem or can I still apply?

You can apply.

Can I finish TUMJA after I graduate (bachelor’s/master’s degree)?

Yes.

Are there any restrictions regarding the diversity of scholarship holders?

There are no restrictions concerning our scholarship holders' background, we just aim for a reasonably balanced number of female and male applicants to be admitted.

How decisive is a general social commitment for admission?

General social commitment will not play a big role, desire to participate however will. It is important that you are motivated and actively contribute to the project during your time at TUMJA.

Application

Which materials are required to apply?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Required for...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Motivation</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV (tabular)</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay (2-3 pages) OR Video (2-3 mins) on this year’s call</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transcript</td>
<td>TUM students</td>
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What does the entire application process look like?

Until August 31st, you need to send in your application documents (more here: https://www.ja.tum.de/apply/), which will then be assessed by us.

Around end of September/beginning of October we will inform you via email whether you passed to the selection days, during which you will be assessed by current and former scholarship holders, as well as professors from our partner universities. If you pass this second stage, you will receive a preliminary acceptance and start working with your team on a project you choose.

After some months there will be a final check-up to ensure that the scholarship program still is the right choice for you (do not worry, we don't aim to throw anyone out at that stage).

Should the essay and the motivational letter be in English or German?

Applicants are required to submit all materials in English, including the essay/video and letter of motivation.

What is the difference in content between the motivational letter and the essay?

The motivational letter states your motivation to join the scholarship program. The essay includes your perception of the call and/or a project idea related to it.

Should the CV be tabular or full text?

Please hand in a tabular CV.

Where can I find information about this years’ call?

This year’s call is: “Future Societies - new options, new competencies, new dynamics”. You can find more information on our website: https://www.ja.tum.de/apply/

Is both an essay and a video required?

No. You should only submit one of them. The choice is up to you.

Is there any requirement regarding the length of the motivational letter?

A motivational letter of about 1-2 pages is sufficient.

I would like to make a video about the call instead of an essay. What are the requirements?

Timewise, the video must not be longer than 2-3 minutes.

Please keep in mind that the video should stay anonymous, therefore, videos with you sitting in front of the camera will not be accepted.
Please also refrain from just reading out an essay – we value creativity, and if you choose a video over an essay, this should be conveyed through the visual layer as well.

**Does the essay have to be in scientific writing or is it about intellectually challenging perceptions?**

A scientific writing format is not required. We are only interested in your ideas related to the current year’s call.

**What exactly should I write for the call?**

We are being vague on purpose. It is intended to give a direction and something to start brainstorming on. While your essay/video and the projects should be related to the call in some way, we do not have a formal restriction.

**Are the projects based on the essays submitted as part of the application?**

They do not necessarily have to be identical. You will have the opportunity to collaborate with a group of your choice and develop a project together, independent of the project idea in your essay.

**Is an uncertified statement regarding the grades from TUM Online sufficient for the application?**

Yes. A “Leistungsnachweis”/”Grade report”, as exported through TUMonline is fine.

**Do I need to submit my bachelor grade report if I am currently pursuing my master's degree?**

No, just submit the current grade report of your master’s program.

**Should we include a project idea when writing the essay?**

We welcome any project ideas that you bring to the essay. However, this is not a must, as you have time in the seminars to define a topic or project idea (which you also must agree on as a team).

**Does my submitted project have to be strictly related to my field of study?**

Preferably not. You will be joining a group of interdisciplinary students from all fields of study. Figuring out a common interest is more important.

**I am a nominated applicant. When should I submit a Letter of Recommendation?**

The letter of recommendation is optional for nominated applicants and you will not directly be preferred just for submitting one.

If you feel like your CV and Letter of Motivation might not give us a complete picture of you as an applicant, you might consider asking someone for a Letter of Recommendation, which may be written by a professor, someone running an organization or student initiative you volunteer for, even a former teacher of yours.
Keep in mind, however, that their impression of you should be up to date and applicable to the offering of this program.

**Is there any specific requirement for the recommendation letter in terms of its content?**

There are no special requirements for this document. A standard letter of recommendation in full text is sufficient.

**Who will assess my application?**

Taskforce Recruiting, which mainly consists of active scholarship holders and alumni, are responsible for deciding who will be invited to the selection days. In the selection days, however, professors are also involved.

**Do applicants from all universities compete or is there a set number of scholarships for each university?**

There is no limit to how many applicants are selected per university. Only the best will be selected, regardless of which educational institution they apply from.

The list of participating educational institutions can be found on our webpage: [https://www.ja.tum.de/ja/partner/](https://www.ja.tum.de/ja/partner/).

**Selection Days**

**What are the selections days?**

The selection days are the second stage of application. They consist of an assessment centre, where you will have to participate in a group activity and an interview. Timewise, they last around 3-4 hours.

**I cannot attend the selection days in person, will this be a problem?**

We strongly advise you to attend the selection days in person, as it makes it easier for us to assess you and gives you an opportunity to gain a brief overview of the program. However, for those unable to attend, a longer, more in-depth online interview will be scheduled.

**What is the language of communication during the selection days?**

English. We are not looking for fluency but expect you to be able to engage in conversations.
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

General Questions

How is this different from e.g., Manage and More?

The TUMJA is directed towards an academic career. This does not mean that you are expected to work in academia later, but there is less of a focus on entrepreneurship than in other programs at the TUM.

Is there an exchange program with international universities as part of TUMJA?

We are currently working on an exchange with a London College. A few scholarship holders will get selected each year to participate.

How many people were nominated? Based on what criteria?

Around 8000. That means 15% on average, but the exact percentages differ depending on the size of your school.

How many students are invited for the selection days?

About 100 applicants.

How many people will be accepted?

Between 40 and 50.

Is the program online or in person? What if I am currently staying abroad/planning to do so?

You can expect that the projects will be in person, at least in the beginning and the end. However, it is up to the teams to decide how they organize their group meetings. Spending some time abroad (e.g. exchange semester) is always possible.

Can participating in this program help me to get a PhD position/master's thesis/...?

TUMJA will give you the opportunity to improve your scientific and social skills. While we cannot guarantee you a PhD or Master’s position, the skills you acquire in this program can be a plus when applying for academic positions, evidenced by a high number of our former members having continued their academic career after a bachelor’s degree.

Will the scholarship be in English?

Yes, at least the seminars will be. Within your team, the language you use to communicate is up to you to decide.

Will I receive ECTS or a certificate for participating in TUMJA?

The goal of TUMJA is to advance students interested in pursuing academic careers. We value participants who show a genuine interest in the program and aren’t “just there for the credits”. Thus, you will not receive ECTS for participating. However, you will receive a certificate of participation to show on your CV.
But if this is your only motivation, please keep in mind that you will likely not enjoy working in a team for 20 months.

**What successful projects have come from TUMJA?**

There are a lot. You have probably heard of the TUM Campuslauf and seen MVG bikes around Munich – both of which started as projects in Junge Akademie. Other well-known initiatives include “TUM4Mind” or “Quintessence”. The latter was selected as one of the main teams of the TUM Future Learning Initiative 2020.

**How interdisciplinary is it?**

We nominate students from all faculties and our partner institutions (which include the HFF, HMTM and AdBK – see https://www.ja.tum.de/ja/partner/). During the assessment we consider the diversity of and differences between study programs. In the last years, the final selection included a lot of different backgrounds.

**What if I leave my university/institution during the project?**

This is not a problem. Many scholarship holders finish a bachelor’s or master’s degree during the project.

**Does this program interfere with other programs/scholarships?**

No, usually not. Since the TUMJA is not a financial scholarship program, there is no interference with programs that offer financial aid (like the Deutschlandstipendium or Studienstiftung).

When it comes to student initiatives, the only limiting factor is whether you have enough time to participate in several programs.

**Time Management**

**What is the expected workload?**

We estimate around 6 hours per week; however, this is not a constant and work distribution is quite flexible. An agreement must be found within your team and taskforce.

**Does it make sense to apply if I am doing or planning a PhD?**

Yes, as it is a great way to get involved with common students interested in research. We also have some scholarship holders here that are in a PhD program.

**Is the experience worth the time?**

According to our current and former scholarship holders: YES.

You receive an opportunity to meet like-minded individuals from different fields of study. You can realize your project, while simultaneously learning how to structure and manage it. Additionally, there are various social events and invitations to extracurricular talks with experts from various fields.
Is it possible to be less active during exam periods or is it expected that you are always flexible to work on the project? / Do we have to work for TUMJA during the semester break/holidays?

In short: yes, to both. You and your plan the timeline of your project and consider the schedule of each group member.

What if I get accepted but realize that I do not have enough time?

We have a preliminary acceptance phase of several months. If you really do not have enough time, you will be able to leave. But consider that the later you do this, the bigger your impact on your team members will be – so please consider in advance whether TUMJA suits your time schedule in the coming 20 months.

Funding & Finance

What are the requirements for a project to be funded by the program?

The TUMJA is glad to fund parts of your projects where necessary, as long as your team’s demands are reasonable.

Do the scholarship holders also get a stipend/financial reimbursement?

You will not receive personal funding as this is not a financial scholarship program and only provides financial aid for realisation of projects.

Organizational Questions

Is it possible to be kicked out of TUMJA due to poor performance?

So far, we have not had such a case. The preliminary acceptance after passing the selection days serves the purpose to re-evaluate whether TUMJA is still the right program for you after a few months but is not intended to reduce the number of scholarship holders.

Where do the weekend seminars take place? Is there any cost or fees?

There are no fees as we take care of them for you. The weekend seminars usually take place somewhere near Munich, most commonly in youth hostels.

Are we required to participate in a project and an organizational taskforce?

Yes, every scholarship holder is a member of a team and additionally joins a taskforce after 3 months of project work.

Projects & Project Work

Approximately how many students are in a team?

Group sizes vary. Usually, we do not have more than 8 students per team.
How are groups decided? And how are projects decided?

Groups of 5-8 people are formed based on a first common project idea after the application procedure. The exact projects will then be found and redefined within that respective group along the way. You will have a lot of time to find your specific project, so do not worry about having to work on something that you did not agree to.

How many groups are there per class?

Usually, 4-6. See https://www.ja.tum.de/projekte/ for last years' groups.

How free are we in choosing our projects and realizing our ideas?

We expect and encourage you to be creative with it. It all starts with the first kick-off event, where you and other scholarship holders discuss your ideas and form your groups. The project must be related to the call in some way, though.

What restrictions are there on the projects?

You are mostly free to do what interests you. You will receive guidance from tutors (usually alumni) and supervisors (usually professors) and will have to write a scientific paper based on a research question at the end. Our project could either be fully scientific or a product/device (e.g., an app) that can help answer a research question.

What support will we get for the projects?

Aside from seminars, tutors (usually alumni, 2 per team) and supervisors (usually professors, 2 per team), we can support the project financially or with networking. If there are certain things that your project needs, you will also find individual help for that in the TUMJA.

Is the project theoretical or is there a possibility to realize it?

Most projects are realized or prototyped, at least. You can find more information about previous projects on our website.

Is it possible for projects to collaborate with other initiatives or research groups from different universities?

Generally, yes, but this depends on the exact case.

Have projects been cancelled in the past? Is it possible to redefine a project’s goals during the 20 months?

Yes, you can always redefine your goals. However, it is worth mentioning that so far, no project has been completely abandoned, but the goals have always been changed and redefined.

At the symposium, which wraps up the scholarship after 20 months, most projects are only loosely related to the call they started with.

What happens to the projects after the scholarship?

That depends on you and your team. There is always the possibility to continue working on it. Sometimes, they are also integrated into existing departments or projects at TUM.
If there is no project I am interested in, is it possible to quit or would this be a disadvantage for others?

YOU define your project with your group and have a lot of time to do so. If you really do not find an agreement with your group, you can quit but should nevertheless think about the consequences for your team. By quitting you might also deprive somebody else of the opportunity.

Taskforces

What are the taskforces for exactly?

TUMJA is in large parts organized and run by its scholarship holders and alumni. The taskforces have organically been created whenever there was a need and interest for a certain task. For example, the entire application process you are currently facing as well as the info events are organized by the taskforce Recruiting.

What does taskforce work look like?

You can find information on the individual taskforces here [https://www.ja.tum.de/taskforces/](https://www.ja.tum.de/taskforces/). The kind of work differs between all of them, but as the names suggest, we have a taskforce concerned with recruiting the next class, one responsible for various marketing materials, one planning the symposium event that each class ends with, among many more.