



Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät

MSc Geosciences (Paleobiology)

Program Handbook

2025



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Welcome

The Paleobiology Group at FAU is made up of an enthusiastic team of international researchers and students, who conduct fundamental research into the patterns and processes that have generated the astonishing diversity of life on Earth. From molecules to ecosystems, our work spans the emergence of the earliest form of life, to the evolutionary impacts of environmental change, sustainability, and the biodiversity crisis.

Through the MSc Geosciences (Paleobiology) program, you will develop an understanding of the evolution of life on Earth through the study of paleobiology and geosciences. The program will equip and encourage you to develop independence of thought and learning practices. You will develop the skills to enable you to succeed in your future employment or advance to further formal study and, crucially, equip you for the life-long learning which is essential for adapting to new information, work practices and cultures.

Your thesis project in the final semester will allow you to specialize in an area of paleobiology that most interests and inspires you, complemented by courses available across a wide range of topics that focus on both core concepts in paleobiology and the development of key research skills. We hope that the deep knowledge you will gain from this program will provide you with a solid scientific framework from which to think creatively and explore the history of life on Earth and its interactions with society.

Prof. Wolfgang Kiessling
Head of Paleobiology

A note on this handbook

This handbook applies to students taking the MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology) taught by staff at the Institute for Paleoenvironment (Lehrstuhl für Paläoumwelt) and the GeoZentrum Nordbayern at FAU. It provides a guide to what is expected of you on this program and the academic and personal support available to you. Please retain it for future reference.

The information provided in this handbook is accurate at time of preparation (see date below). Any necessary revisions will be notified to students via email or StudOn. Please note that, in the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the general regulations published in the university and information contained in program or local handbooks, the provisions of the university will prevail.

This version last modified: 02.10.25

THE PROGRAM

The MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology) follows a programme that builds deep knowledge in specific subjects related to paleobiology through a series of core and supplementary modules that build key and transferable skills. Students who successfully complete the program will earn an 'MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology)'.

Program structure

The MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology) is part of a wider program, the MSc Geosciences (in German: MSc Geowissenschaften). To meet formal university requirements, this program is divided into a major and a minor subject:

- The **Paleobiology-Paleoenvironments major** provides a theoretical framework in macroevolution, ecology, paleoenvironmental reconstruction, and statistical analysis.
- The **Climate and Earth Systems minor** consists of the individual field- and specimen-based projects and provides students with skills such as preparation of funding applications, scientific writing, and communication, as well as environmental and geochemical background for interdisciplinary collaborations.

The Paleobiology program is designed to take place over 2 years, made up of 4 semesters. During the first 3 semesters (year 1 and half of year 2), students will take regular and supplementary courses, which include field excursions and 'block courses' on a range of topics. The final (4th) semester is dedicated to the thesis project. The entire program is delivered through English by a team of international instructors.

University regulations stipulate that students must ordinarily complete their MSc program within 5 semesters. Special permission from administration is required for additional semesters beyond this limit. In the past, some of our students have elected to do an internship or research trip abroad in this extra semester.

The MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology) is an intensive program that is designed to expand your knowledge, build your skills, and challenge you. During the courses, you will be introduced to a variety of tools and literature. Reading and studying outside of the core lecture material is an essential part of the program.

Semester dates & timetables

Important dates for the semester and between-semester periods can be found on the main FAU [webpage](#). Bavaria has the most public holidays out of all German states, so [take note](#) of these dates too. Timetables will be made available just before the beginning of each semester. Some times and rooms might be subject to change - watch for emails from instructors.

Learning outcomes

Each individual course of the MSc program will have learning outcomes that are specific to that topic, but the program also has more general learning outcomes. On successful completion of the two-year MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology) program, students will be able to:

- Outline and appraise the important basic underlying concepts and current research developments in paleobiology and allied disciplines
- Demonstrate proficiency in key skills related to paleobiology, including, but not restricted to, organism identification, fossil and data handling, and placing extinct organisms in their wider evolutionary, phylogenetic, and paleoenvironmental contexts
- Apply a rigorous scientific approach to problem solving
- Communicate effectively and efficiently in a variety of contemporary scientific writing styles, as well as orally and graphically
- Demonstrate technical competence in the handling of research facilities and operate safely in a laboratory environment, both individually and as an effective team member
- Design data collection procedures and carry out research (including lab and fieldwork) using standard and ethical protocols
- Critically analyse and appraise scientific results (including those obtained personally)
- Proficiently use appropriate computational tools for data management and analysis
- Proficiently apply a range of statistical and other quantitative methods to analyse data and interpret results
- Proficiently search and critically assess a broad range of scientific literature
- Competently appraise and operate various databases for paleobiological research and associated data types
- Proficiently use appropriate documentation, graphical, and analytical software to prepare scientific results, as well as assigned reports and assessments
- Articulate the contribution made by paleobiology and allied disciplines to society, especially in the realm of understanding biodiversity and climate change throughout Earth's history

Courses & credits (ECTS)

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is an academic credit system based on the estimated student workload required to achieve the objectives of a module or program of study. It is designed to enable academic recognition for periods of study, to facilitate student mobility and credit accumulation and transfer. The ECTS is the recommended credit system for higher education in Germany and across the European Higher Education Area.

The ECTS weighting for a module is a measure of the student input or workload required for that module, based on factors such as the number of contact hours, the number and length of assessment exercises, class preparation and private study time, laboratory classes, examinations, and so on as appropriate. There is no intrinsic relationship between the credit volume of a module and its level of difficulty. The European norm for full-time study over one academic year is 60 credits and a 'second cycle' (MSc) degree usually equates to 120 ECTS credits. 1 credit represents an estimated 20-25 hours of student input, thus a 5-credit module will be designed to require 100-125 hours of student input including class contact time, private study time, assessments and examinations.

Students taking the MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology) take 30 ECTS credits each semester for a total of four semesters over two years. For the first three semesters, this includes 25 ECTS credits for core 'regular' courses and 5 ECTS credits for supplementary courses (e.g., fieldtrips). In the final semester, 30 ECTS credits are dedicated to the thesis project. See table below for a visual representation. More information can be found on the MSc webpage: <https://palaeobiology.nat.fau.de/program/courses/>

NOTE: Students are individually responsible for tracking their own ECTS credits, so please make sure you understand the system and what is expected of you. If you have any questions or are unsure about any aspects, please communicate with the instructors or MSc coordinator as soon as possible. You should keep track of ECTS credits via [Campo](#) (see below for more information).

Semester	ECTS	Major: Paleobiology-Paleoenvironments			Minor: Climate and Earth Systems		SC
1	30	Invertebrate Paleobiology	Micropaleontology	Oceanography	Literature Seminar	Geochemical Proxies in Paleoenvironmental Analysis	Computers in Geosciences*
			Biostratigraphy	Introduction to Paleoenvironmental Reconstruction	Consolidation of R Programming Skills		
2	30	Macroevolution	Bayesian Phylogenetics for Paleobiology	Analytical Paleobiology	Research Project Implementation	Hypothesis Testing in Earth System Science	SC to choose
		Selected Topics in Macroevolution			Climate and Earth System Data	Laboratory Methods in Paleoenvironmental Research	
3	30	Macroecology	Geobiology of Reefs	Microfacies Analysis and Diagenesis of Carbonate Rocks	Research Project Design	Science Communication	SC to choose
			Programming and Statistics in Reef System Analysis				
4	30	Master thesis					

SC: Supplementary Courses; *Elective, but highly recommended.

Background knowledge

Students join the MSc in Geosciences (Paleobiology) from a variety of different backgrounds. Therefore, some students might find certain aspects of the program more challenging than others.

To help prepare you for courses on a wide variety of topics from both biology and geosciences, we recommend that you dedicate some private study time to building upon your background knowledge in subjects you are least familiar with. Below is a recommended reading list for books (which you can find in the library, see page 18) and other online resources.

In addition, the first classes of two Semester 1 courses will be dedicated to touching on important concepts in both biology and geosciences:

Course	Wider topic covered in 1st class	Class instructor
Invertebrate Paleobiology	Biology (taxonomy, classification, evolution, biodiversity, etc.)	Prof. Rachel Warnock
Introduction to Paleoenvironmental Reconstruction	Geosciences (sedimentology, petrology, stratigraphy, etc.)	Anna Merkel

Recommended resources:

Books

- [Earth System History](#) (Stanley & Luczaj, 4th edition)
- [Introduction to Paleobiology and the Fossil Record](#) (Benton, 1st edition)
- [Invertebrate Palaeontology & Evolution](#) (Clarkson, 4th edition)
- [Vertebrate Palaeontology](#) (Benton, 4th edition)

Online resources:

- [Understanding Evolution](#) by UC Berkeley
- [OpenGeology](#) - online textbook
- [Libre Texts Biology](#) - various online textbooks for biology
- [PBD Eons](#) - YouTube channel on key topics in paleobiology
- [Pal\(a\)eoPERCS](#) - virtual seminar series by early career researchers
- [PalaeoCast](#) - podcast focused on the latest palaeontology research
- [Palaeontology\[online\]](#) - paleontology articles for non-specialists

MSc thesis project

During the 4th (final) semester, all students must complete a thesis project. This project takes place over approximately 6 months (typically March–September) and is equivalent to 30 ECTS. Some projects might be desk-/computer-based, while others might involve lab work and/or fieldwork.

Developing research skills and ideas

Students are encouraged to develop independent ideas for their thesis project, inspired by their own interests and career aspirations. In the first three semesters, students will complete a series of courses that will help them to prepare for the thesis project and hone their ideas:

Semester	Course	Description of task(s)
1	Literature Seminar	Exploring and critically appraising current literature in paleobiology and allied disciplines
2	Research Project Implementation	Short-term research project (~8 weeks) to develop research skills (e.g., data management and analysis, and report writing)
3	Research Project Design	Creating a written proposal for a longer term research project in the form of a grant application. This can form the basis on the final thesis project.
4	Thesis project	Independent project work (~6 months)

Choosing a project and supervisor

During the Research Project Design course in Semester 3, students will begin developing and expanding on their ideas for their thesis project. It is at this time that you are also encouraged to reach out to research staff to further discuss their ideas and connect with an appropriate project supervisor - please see communications tips on page 9 and details of research areas in the contacts table on page 10. Please be aware that there are a limited number of projects that can be supervised by each instructor, so it is good to have alternative project options in mind.

Registering your thesis

Before the MSc thesis begins, students should download the registration form (in German) from the GZN webpage [here](#). This form should be filled in (English is fine) and signed by the supervisor(s) before being submitted in person to [Frau Désirée Holler](#) (Room 1.035, Habmondstraße 6). The agreed upon submission deadline should include allowance for any significant periods of fieldwork, internships, etc. that pertain to other parts of the student's degree (e.g., a one week field course would add 7 days to the 6 month period).

Submitting your thesis

Before the submission deadline, three (3) printed and bound copies of the thesis should be submitted to Frau Holler. The title page should be formatted according to the [example](#) (it can be in English). Each copy of the thesis should include a signed “Statement of Authorship” page (downloadable from the GZN webpage [here](#)). This document needs to be printed and signed in person, a digital signature is not sufficient.

Students can use any printing/binding shop (Druckladen) to print and bind their thesis, and there is an excellent [Druckladen](#) very conveniently located at Lorlebergplatz, close to the Paleontology Institute. Please use soft cover binding (in any colour of your choice) and please do not use spiral bound, adhesive binding only. Please also submit a digital copy of your thesis to your supervisor once completed.

Thesis guidelines

- As English is the primary academic language of this program, all theses must be written in English (American and British English are both fine)
- The thesis may not exceed 10,000 words (not including references)
- There are no formal requirements for which font should be used, the spacing, etc. However, we recommend the following for clarity and ease:
 - Line spacing should be at least 1.5pt or double spacing
 - Standard serif or sans serif fonts such as Arial, Times New Roman, etc.
 - Font size should be at least 11pt
 - Text should be aligned to the right side or justified (i.e. lines are all the same length)
 - Pages should be numbered and the thesis should contain a Table of Contents
- APA is a standard referencing/citation format, but you are welcome to use any other non-numbered format that is typical of scientific journals that cater to paleobiology (e.g. *Palaeontology*, *Paleobiology*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, etc.)

Communications

Throughout your time on the program, you will need to use and manage several different forms of communication. Email will likely be the most frequently used form of communication.

Emails

It is very important that you keep up to date with your e-mails from the university, please check them regularly (at least daily). They provide important information about examination dates, registration dates or important updates from the university. You will also receive emails from the program instructors about various matters, such as changes to class times, learning materials, and assignment deadlines. Campo notifications will also typically go to your email account.

To make sure that you don't miss any important information, you can set up-email forwarding to [redirect](#) your email to another personal account.

Email tips:

- Emails are a more formal form of communication than messaging and are more structured. It is typically necessary to begin with a salutation (e.g., Dear, ...) and end with a polite sign-off (e.g., Best wishes, ...)
- When emailing people you have not met before (both within and outside of the university), it is polite to use their titles (e.g., Dr., Professor, etc.)
- In Germany, it is customary to use Frau/Herr (Ms./Mr.) to address people, so bear this in mind when emailing places such as the Masters Office (Masterbüro). These salutations typically precede academic titles, so a professor would be addressed as 'Frau Professor Dr. X' and so forth
- Instructors on the MSc program can be addressed by their first name, including via email

Contacting your instructors

You can contact each of the instructors via email or in person (e.g., before/after classes). If you would like to arrange a meeting for any reason, please send an email beforehand to arrange a suitable time. It's a good idea to communicate the topic you wish to discuss and to indicate whether the matter is urgent. Some instructors operate an open door policy, while others politely request that meetings be arranged in advance. You can find all contact details in the next section and their office hours (if applicable) on the MSc [webpage](#).

Reference letters

If you need a reference letter, please give a **minimum** of two weeks notice to the relevant member of staff. Reference letters can take considerable time to compose. It helps if you send your current CV, a description of the job or role you're applying to, and a few sentences about why you're interested in the position.

Key contacts

Name	Primary role(s)	Research keywords	Email (@fau.de)
Instructors @ Paleobiology			
Prof. Wolfgang Kiessling	Professor, Chair of Paleobiology	Coral reefs, extinction, diversity dynamics, climate impacts	wolfgang.kiessling
Prof. Rachel Warnock	Professor; Dean of Studies	Phylogenetics, computational biology	rachel.warnock
Prof. Axel Munnecke	Professor	Carbonates, microfacies analysis, field geology	axel.munnecke
Dr. Ádám Kocsis	Assistant professor; Data infrastructure coordinator	Biodiversity dynamics, spatial diversity patterns, extinction	adam.kocsis
Dr. Sebastian Teichert	Assistant professor; Collections manager	Arctic diversity, coralline red algae, geochemical proxies	sebastian.teichert
Anna Merkel	PhD researcher	Carbonates, microfacies analysis	anna.merkel
Bastian Seidl	PhD researcher	Microfacies	bastian.seidl
Birgit Leipner-Mata	Lab Manager & preparator	Laboratory methods, fossil preparation	birgit.leipner-mata
Christian Schulbert	Imaging Technician	Imaging, CT scanning	christian.schulbert
Instructors @ GeoZentrum Nordbayern			
Dr. Luca Caracciolo	Assistant professor	Geochemistry, basin analysis	luca.caracciolo

Further contact information and office hours can be found on the following webpages:

MSc Paleobiology webpage: <https://palaeobiology.nat.fau.de/>

GeoZentrum Nordbayern: <https://www.gzn.nat.fau.eu/>

Behavioural expectations

All students are expected to behave in a courteous, collegial and respectful manner, and must show respect for the private and intellectual property of others.

Disrespectful behaviour or behaviour that excludes, intimidates, or causes discomfort to others will not be tolerated. Discrimination or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated, including that based on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, citizenship, nationality, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, age, education, socio-economic status, and experience level.

These expectations extend to all activities and events associated with the MSc Geosciences (Paleobiology), including regular classes, fieldwork, seminars, and social media.

If you are the subject of unacceptable behaviour or have witnessed any unacceptable behaviour, please reach out to a trusted instructor or the Dean of Studies (Prof. Rachel Warnock). All reports will be kept in the strictest confidence.

ASSESSMENT & EXAMS

Each course of the MSc program has a specific method of assessment that will be communicated to you by the instructor(s) at the beginning of the relevant semester. General information on examinations and assessments can be found below, but please contact your instructors if you have any questions or concerns.

Submitting assessments

For courses that are assessed via a report or written assignment (not exams), these documents should normally be submitted before the agreed deadline via email to the course instructor. Please check with your instructor(s) if you are unsure.

Examinations

For regular courses that are assessed by written examinations, the exams typically take place at the end of each semester (i.e., in February and July each year). Due to the structure of the ECTS system for this program, the majority of exam events are actually combined exams for two courses (see table on page 7 and list below). The exams will normally be held in the same room as the classes are held and further details (e.g., timing and expectations) will be communicated to you by the instructors in advance.

For general information on examinations at FAU, see the dedicated webpage:

<https://www.fau.eu/education/advice-and-services/examination-offices>

The courses that are assessed by written examinations for the 2025/26 year are as follows:

- *Biostratigraphy + Micropaleontology (Semester 1)*
- *Paleoenvironments + Oceanography (Semester 1)*
- *Invertebrates (Semester 1)*
- *Geochemistry (Semester 1)*
- *Macroevolution + Special Topics (Semester 2)*
- *Macroecology (Semester 3)*

Registering for exams

Students must register for examinations in advance via [Campo](#). The registration period is typically open for one month between mid-November to mid-December. You should receive instructions and further information from the central university administration close to this period. Please communicate with your instructor(s) or classmates if anything is unclear as soon as possible.

Results

The results of written examinations and submitted assessments will be uploaded to Campo shortly after the exam date or submission deadline. During busy periods, the uploading of results might be delayed, so we ask for your patience and understanding.

Grading

If you are joining us from outside of Germany, the German grading system is likely different from the one you are used to from your previous degree. The best grade in the German academic system is 1.0, while the minimum passing grade is 4.0. Anything graded as 4.3 or below is a failing grade. Grades are typically set at intervals of .0, .3, and .7. Please note that in the German notation, the decimal separator is typically a comma and will likely appear as such in Campo and other systems.

Grade	Description	Pass/fail
1.0 – 1.3	Excellent	Pass
1.7 – 2.0	Very good	Pass
2.3 – 2.7	Good	Pass
3.0 – 3.3	Satisfactory	Pass
3.7 – 4.0	Sufficient	Pass
4.3 – 5.0	Inadequate	Fail

You can find various conversion tools for converting German grades into a system you are more familiar with online. For example:

<https://erudera.com/germany/german-grading-system/>

Failing an exam

If you fail an exam, you will have to take the repeat exam in the following semester. Students with a grade of less than 40% will be automatically registered for repeat exams. Course instructors will communicate the date and time of the repeat exam to you in advance. For regular examinations at FAU (and in most other German universities), you have a maximum of 3 attempts to succeed at passing an exam. If you fail your final exam attempt, you must be deregistered from the program. Please be aware that if you have passed an exam you cannot repeat it in order to improve your grade. Only *passed* exams will be listed in your transcript of records.

If you are concerned about your exam performance or results, please speak to the course instructor or the Dean of Studies as soon as possible.

Medical certificates

In the unfortunate event that an illness prevents you from taking an exam or submitting an assignment, you must communicate with the course instructor, in confidence. Medical certificates are required for absences from exams. They will be able to assist you with reasonable alternative arrangements.

Attendance

Regular attendance at regular and supplementary classes (lectures, practical sessions, tutorials, etc.) is expected for all MSc students. If you are unable to attend a class due to illness or other pertinent reason, please contact the relevant instructor(s) in advance of the class. For field trips and excursions, attendance is compulsory in order to achieve the necessary ECTS - further details will be communicated by the instructor in advance.

Disabilities

Students with a disability(/ies) or medical condition(s) that are likely to impair their performance in courses (including fieldwork) or examinations (e.g., asthma, dyslexia, pregnancy, etc.) are encouraged to inform the relevant course instructor, in confidence to discuss suitable accommodations and/or further steps.

Students with disabilities or medical conditions can also directly contact FAU's Liaison Officer for Students with Disabilities. Further information can be found at the dedicated webpage:

<https://www.fau.eu/education/advice-and-services/support-services/students-with-disabilities/>

Research ethics and standards

Good scientific practice and ethical standards are of pivotal importance at FAU and the university is legally obliged to ensure good scientific practice in its teaching and research. Extending from this, all assessments that involve a research component (including the thesis project) must adhere to university standards - more information can be found on the following webpages:

- <https://www.fau.eu/research/responsible-research/>
- <https://www.fau.eu/graduate-centre/doctoral-degrees/good-academic-practice/>

Plagiarism and scientific misconduct

Plagiarism is the fraudulent representation of another person's language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions as one's own original work. At FAU, plagiarism is considered a form of [scientific misconduct](#) and can be subject to a formal investigation by the university. It can sometimes

be challenging for students to recognise what good academic practice looks like, so we encourage you to speak to your instructor(s) and/or supervisor if you are unsure.

On Using LLMs and Generative Artificial Intelligence

[Large Language Models](#) (LLMs), such as OpenAI's Chat-GPT or Google Gemini are becoming more available and frequently used in everyday life and academic/scientific environments are no exception. Students are encouraged to explore the possibilities of these tools in a responsible way, with **critical reflection** on the output of these generative models being the highest priority. Depending on the judgement of a course's lead instructor, in the use of LLMs is permitted for solving tasks in general, but the use of these tools must be indicated clearly and unambiguously. A gentle reminder: artificial intelligence will not take responsibility for your education or mistakes - only you have the power to learn and make decisions! For more information see the [FAU Guidelines for AI](#) (currently only available in German).

GENERAL INFORMATION

University systems

1. Identity Management (IdM) system

The [Identity Management \(IdM\) system](#) manages access to numerous services at FAU. The IdM portal is used to activate and manage services, such as WiFi (e.g., eduroam), e-mail, your FAUcard and the University Library. You can also see the personal data that you have saved (e.g., name, address).

IdM's key functions:

- Storing personal information
- Changing your address

FAUcard

The FAUcard is the university's multifunctional 'smartcard'. It functions as your student ID and library card, and can be used to make cashless payments at university cafeterias and restaurants, as well as pay for photocopying and accessing certain buildings. Once you have activated your IdM account, your FAUcard will be sent to the postal address you entered. For more information (e.g., what to do if you lose your FAUcard) see the dedicated webpage:

<https://www.fau.eu/education/study-organisation/faucard/>

2. Campo

[Campo](#) is the main academic administration system of the university. As a student, you can use Campo to register for exams, view your grades and download the certificate of enrolment. It also provides a list of all modules you are enrolled for, as well as information on when and where courses are held, together with the names and contact details of the instructors.

Campo's key functions:

- Joining courses
- Registering for exams
- Generating timetables

StudOn

[StudOn](#) is the university's e-learning platform, where instructors upload class materials and other resources. As a student, you will also use StudOn to enrol in classes. Links to access the different course files are provided on Campo.

StudOn's key functions:

- Accessing course material (e.g. lecture slides and recommended literature)
- FSI communications - see page 22

Locations

FAU has buildings all around Erlangen and its suburbs. The buildings used for teaching on the Paleobiology program are somewhat spread out, but most lie close to the city centre - see map on following page.

GeoZentrum (*Schloßgarten 5*)

The main building of the GeoZentrum is located in the Gardens of the University Castle (Schloßgarten). Most geology-related courses take place in this building, but also some courses of the Masters program. These normally take place in the Paleo practical room on the top floor.

Pal building (*Loewenichstraße 28*)

The main paleobiology building (often referred to as the “Institute”, or simply “Pal”) is an old, three-storey villa, about ten minutes walk to the east of the GeoZentrum. Most of the teaching staff has offices in this building, and is also the place where you will find our secretary, Frau Sabine Wolf. Some parts of the paleontology collection are also stored in the basement of the pal building.

Lab building (*Fichtestraße 8*)

Opening from the garden of the main building is the laboratory building, where most equipment is located, including the rock lab, our Micro Computed Tomograph, MicroMill and Scanning Electron Microscope.

‘Henkestraße’ (*Henkestraße 91, ground floor*)

The recently acquired buildings on Henkestraße are about 5 minutes walk south of the main Pal building. It is a part of the “Medical Valley” and contains some more staff offices, our discipline-specific library, and our main seminar room where the majority of teaching takes place.

Other teaching venues

A large part of the university campus lies to the south of the city in the Technical Faculty (Technische Fakultät). This is sometimes referred to as the Tenneslohe campus, or similar. It is easily reached by several bus routes, as well as by bike (10–20 min cycle from the Pal building).

Mensa (*Langemarckplatz 4*)

At the Mensa (university cafeteria), there are menus that change daily and always include vegan and vegetarian options. You can pay using your FAUcard, and there are charging machines available on the ground floor. See their webpage for more details (only in German): <https://www.werkswelt.de/index.php?id=Impl>

Libraries

Main library

The main library is located on Schuhstraße, which is ca. 100 m next to the Schlossgarten. Here, you can borrow and order books from other Universities (interlibrary loan). You will also find spaces for working, copy machines, scanners, and a small cafe. You will need to [activate the library function](#) on your FAUcard before you borrow books or use the copy machines.

All information on the FAU libraries (including the paleo library), catalogues, opening hours, events, etc., are updated frequently on the webpage: <https://ub.fau.de/en/>. Please note that the main library is typically closed on public holidays.

Paleo and Geology libraries

The Paleontological library (catalogue reference: 12PA) is located next to the seminar room in the building on Henkestraße. The librarian is rarely present but you may contact staff members, who each have a key. The Geological library (catalogue reference: 12GL) and the Mineralogical library (12MN) are located on the ground floor of the GeoZentrum building, where you will also find some study spaces. It is not possible to borrow books from these collections in order to keep them accessible for all students, but you can work with them inside the libraries.

Study spaces

There are several study spaces available for students across the main university buildings, as well as on the other campuses. The most relevant and frequently used ones are:

1. **Geology library** (GeoZentrum) - desks and computers
2. **Henkestraße building** - desks and computers next to fossil collections
3. **Main library** - various options available including bookable private rooms

Scholarships and grants

Students on our program, particularly international students, have the option to apply for several competitive scholarship programs. FAU has tabulated the most popular ones here: <https://www.fau.eu/education/student-life/financing-your-studies/scholarship-organisations/>

DAAD

Scholarships for international students. Search the DAAD database here: <https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/scholarships/>

Bayhost

Students from Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe are also eligible for scholarships from BAYHOST: <https://www.uni-regensburg.de/bayhost/stipendien/index.html>

Other

Once you are enrolled, you can apply for a wide number of scholarships, e.g., the “[Deutschlandstipendium](#)” or [StipendiumPlus](#).

Further opportunities can be found on the German portal e-fellows.net. Other scholarships are awarded to students by religious or political organisations, which you can search for online.

Hiwi jobs

From time to time, there may be opportunities for students to work as ‘student helper’ or HiWi (short for Hilfwissenschaftler/Studentische Hilfskraft). These are paid positions that enable students who have *not yet* completed an MSc degree to work alongside instructors and other research staff to complete short-term tasks. These positions are capped at a maximum of 10 hours per week, but most range between 2-5 hours per week and are paid by the hour.

Examples of Hiwi jobs include supporting teaching and outreach activities, contributing data to the Paleobiology Database or other local databases, preparing thin sections, scanning and analysing fossils at our micro-CT facility, and curating and/or digitising parts of the fossil collection.

If you are interested in taking on a Hiwi position, get in touch with the relevant instructor or the MSc coordinator. They will be able to discuss your interests and skills with you and inform you on what positions might be available at that time. These positions currently work on a ‘first come, first served’ basis, but across the institute, we try to be as fair as possible. In the future, we expect to advertise these positions on a central platform, which will be communicated to all students.

Social events & Student society (FSI)

The [Geoscience Student Association \(FSI\)](#) is the student society of the GeoZentrum Nordbayern and under the umbrella of student associations at the Faculty of Sciences. The society is made up of student representatives from across all BSc and MSc programs. They are there to support all students with administrative and academic matters, so don't hesitate to reach out to them.

The FSI also organises social events, for example the Barbarafeier (Festival of St. Barbara), which is a rite of passage as a new member of the GeoZentrum, as well as being an alumni celebration. Below are the main social events that make up the core social calendar for Erlangen's geoscientists!

Every Wednesday evening from 8 pm the regulars' table takes place at Eleon for all students and prospective students.

Contacting the FSI:

- By joining the *FSI-Schwarzes Brett Geowissenschaften* (In English: FSI Blackboard Geosciences) course on StudOn
- By emailing or speaking with the president or other members of the society

Freshers' Rally

The Freshers' Rally takes place during the first two weeks of the winter semester. Small groups have to solve puzzles around Erlangen and apply their geological knowledge.

Barbara Festival (Barbarafeier)

The Barbara Festival is traditionally held on the first Monday after St. Barbara's Day (4th of December). St. Barbara is the patron saint of miners (and geologists by extension) and celebrating her festival in this way is unique to Germany. The event typically consists of some food and drinks at the GeoZentrum before a procession through the streets of Erlangen, which ends at the E-Werk social centre for some fun activities and games.

Ries Excursion

In November/December, the FSI organises a freshman excursion to the [Nördlinger Ries](#), just [south of Nürnberg](#). During one or two weekends, everyone can get to know each other and learn something about the regional geology.

GeoBaptism

The "GeoBaptism" is held during the summer semester and involves activities that take place all around Erlangen. It is a must for all new students!