

I. You finished your high school and now?:

You've just got your high school diploma in the pocket. Then congratulations. The high school Diploma is the highest school-leaving qualification in the German education system and with it many doors get wide open for you. With the general higher education entrance qualification, you can start studying at a German university directly after leaving school. Even though these documents focus on the start of your studies, we would like to show you other options that are open to you with the high school Diploma as well as the different types of studies.



The Study: Classical studies at a university are still the most popular form of professional preparation or academic formation. Around 70 % of all high school graduates in the Federal Republic of Germany decide to go to university sooner or later.



Professional Training: More and more young high school graduates are opting for professional training rather than academic studies. Professional education is often the better alternative, especially for young people who are more comfortable with practical and organisational activities.



The dual study programme: offers the opportunity to combine higher education studies with practical work or in-company training.



Voluntary military service: After the suspension of compulsory military service, there is now the possibility of doing voluntary military service. Both men and women can apply for this voluntary service for a duration between 12 and 23 months.

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The Federal Volunteer Service: offers you the opportunity to spend a year in an activity that is characterised by social commitment. Many areas are open to you, such as culture, sport, social issues and ecology. The Federal Volunteer Service is a good opportunity to develop your own personality.

II. The higher education landscape in Germany:

In Germany there are various institutions of higher education, which differ from each other in small and large ways. In this chapter you will find an introduction to the different types of higher education institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany and the higher education degrees associated with them:

- **Higher education institution:** The term higher education institution covers various institutions offering courses of study that are both academic and leading to professional qualifications.
- **University:** Universities represent a type of higher education with a very long European tradition. They are a "place of research and teaching", in other words not only places to prepare for a profession, but also to produce and develop knowledge. In most cases, a high school Diploma is required for admission to a university. Although theory is the main focus of university studies and great importance is attached to the methodology of scientific work, the university also aims to offer a purpose-oriented professional qualification.

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- **Polytechnic:** For some years now, most former universities of applied sciences have also been appearing under the name of university. These institutions of higher education are comparatively young. They too are an institution for research and teaching, but the research here is predominantly oriented towards practical needs and is application- and occupation-oriented. To be able to study at such a university, the technical Diploma is usually sufficient. In comparison to the universities, where there is still a relatively large amount of "academic freedom", the study programmes here are much more tightly and scholastically organized.
- **Schools of art and music:** There are various colleges of art and music in Germany where the entire spectrum of artistic professions - from acting in film and theatre to visual arts and orchestral music - is taught. A prerequisite for admission to artistic courses of study is the successful completion of an aptitude test. Students who aspire to an artistic profession should enquire at an early stage with the universities what skills are already required at the beginning of their studies and how the aptitude test procedure works.
- **Universities of Cooperative Education:** At the University of Cooperative Education, it is possible to combine practical training at a company and studies within the framework of a dual study programme (see "dual study programme"). Here, two partners take on the task of providing the qualification, the University of Cooperative Education for the theory and the company providing the professional development for the practice. During the period of study, students regularly alternate between the university and the company. You can only study at a university of cooperative education with this training contract and must therefore go through the employer's application procedure beforehand.
- **Private universities or universities under church patronage:** There are also a considerable number of smaller or larger private universities in Germany. However,

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only a few of these private institutions are also universities. For the most part, they are private (technical) high schools that offer practice-oriented teaching in specific

areas. The special feature of these universities is that students find much better staff and equipment than at state universities.

Important: Find out which universities are considered particularly excellent in your subject area

III - Academic degrees:

In recent years, confusion has repeatedly arisen in Germany about the various different types of degrees. This can be traced back to the "Bologna Reform" of 1999. The aim of this reform was to standardise (most) degree programmes in Europe and to establish the system of credit points. The various different terminologies are explained below:

- **Bachelor's degree:** The standard degree today is the Bachelor's degree. The degree programme usually lasts three years, which means six semesters. The Bachelor's degree is intended to qualify students for a profession, so that the degree also gives them the opportunity to enter professional life directly. In addition, there is the possibility to deepen the studies with a Master's programme. Depending on the programme, universities confer a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts degree. The Bachelor of Arts is the degree for more humanities or arts studies, while the Bachelor of Science is awarded in more mathematics and science-oriented programmes.
- **Master's degree:** After successful completion of the Bachelor's degree, students have the opportunity to continue their studies in the form of a Master's degree programme, usually with a duration of two years. In principle, there is the option of taking a Master's degree programme that builds on the Bachelor's degree in terms of content and consequently deepens the basic and methodological knowledge

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acquired with the Bachelor's degree ("consecutive Master's") or to take a Master's degree programme that is not related to the subject. Every Master's degree generally entitles the holder to a doctorate. The respective doctoral regulations explain the admission procedure, which is usually an individual procedure.

- **State examinations:** Some study programmes leading to professions in which there is a particular public interest are completed with a state examination. This is the case for courses of study in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, food chemistry, law and, in part, for courses of study for the teaching professions. The final state examination is not an academic degree, but a qualification that leads to professional authorisation. Thus, once you have passed the final examination, you are automatically a doctor, a fully qualified lawyer or a teacher. What these subjects have in common is that the course of study and the content taught are highly regulated in order to safeguard the quality of the degree programmes.

Doctorate: If you are interested in a doctorate, then you should inform yourself at your university.

- **Magister and Diplom:** The Magister and Diplom are degrees that were abolished in the process of the Bologna Reform. The Magister is an academic degree awarded after successful completion of university studies. The Diplom or diploma degree describes the structure of the degree programme and the subdivision into basic and main studies.

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Students for Students is a Projekt of RCDS (Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten)
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