

Step 1

Vocational training or studying in Germany

What are the requirements for studying in Germany? What exactly is vocational training and how does it work? What is a dual study programme? Here you will find an overview of the options open to you and which requirements you have to fulfil in each instance.



In Germany you can either study or sign into a vocational training programme. Both ways hold great possibilities for you.

Foto: Martin Rehm



School attendance in Germany is **compulsory**, beginning around the age of six and continuing – depending on the state - for typically nine to ten years. However, if you perform well you may extend your schooling and graduate (**Abitur**) after twelve or thirteen years; for example at a secondary school (Gymnasium), a comprehensive school (Gesamtschule) or a community school with an upper level (Gemeinschaftsschule mit Oberstufe). This will give you the general entrance level qualification required to study at a **technical college** (Fachhochschule) or **university** (Universität). (Further information can be found in the "[Schulsysteme der Bundesländer](#)")

An Abitur allows you not only to study but also to undertake **vocational training**. Most vocational training programmes do not require a specific school-leaving diploma. However, with the Abitur you obtain a school-leaving diploma which typically gives you a very good chance of finding a vocational training position within a company.

Vocational training?

Vocational training lasts between one and three and a half years, most often three years. There are two types of vocational training available in Germany:

In a **dual study programme** you gain practical work experience within **companies**. For example, if you are training to be a craftsman you learn how to use all the appropriate tools. In commercial vocational training, you learn how to use certain computer programmes or how to behave towards customers. You learn the theory behind your profession in specialised classes at a **vocational school** - for example, mathematics, English, business or law.

In some vocational training programmes you work three days a week at your company and attend vocational school on the remaining two days. For other types of training, you alternate between several weeks at the company and several weeks at the vocational school. As you will be working within a company, you receive a training allowance, in other words you will be paid by the company. The remuneration increases with each year of training. There are around 330 dual study occupations in Germany.

School-based training takes place primarily at a **vocational school**. Typical professions with school-based training include healthcare and nursing, occupational therapist, preschool educator, medical-technical assistant and foreign language correspondent. Work experience is gained mainly through **internships**. You do not receive remuneration for most school-based training. To finance this you can work part-time or your family can support you. Or you may apply for support from the German state, for example via the [☑ Schüler-BAföG](#).

Vocational training usually begins on 1 August or 1 September, sometimes on 1 February or 1 April. You should apply early. Some companies already look for suitable candidates up to one and a half years before the vocational training starts. With others you can apply a few months or weeks prior to commencement.

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Studying?

In order to study you must first apply to the desired degree programme. Applications can be filed only twice a year. In most cases, the university must receive your application by mid-July in order for you to commence your studies in the **winter semester** (term: October to March). If you wish to begin your studies in the **summer semester** (term: April to September), you usually have to apply by mid-January.

Many subjects are very popular which means that there are more applicants than places. In this case the universities decide on whom they admit. There are degree programmes with **limited admission** at every university (nationwide). This means that only a certain number of study places are available for these degree programmes, for example, in medicine and pharmacy. You can apply for these places centrally via the www.hochschulstart.de portal of the Foundation for Higher Education Admission.

Admission to other degree courses is restricted only at some universities (locally), at others **there is open admission**. You apply directly to the university and/or via [☑ www.hochschulstart.de](http://www.hochschulstart.de) for degree programmes with local admission restrictions. Depending on your degree programme and university you must fulfil different requirements in order to be admitted. The best way to find out what this entails is to visit the respective university's website.

Most of the almost 9,500 undergraduate degree programmes that can be commenced directly after receiving your Abitur conclude with a **bachelor's degree**. In addition, there are degree programmes with a **state examination** (for example medicine) and more rarely degree programmes in which one obtains a diploma or master's degree. Bachelor programmes usually last six to eight semesters. Many students then complete a **master's degree**, which lasts another two to four semesters.

Studying in Germany is free of charge - unless you attend a private university. At state universities, you only have to pay an administration fee and, if required, a local travel ticket once per semester. The amount is determined by the

university; some require 50 euros, others 300 euros. In order to support refugees some universities waive or pay the fees for administration, local travel tickets, examinations, or for German courses.

In order to support themselves many students work part-time, for example, in the catering trade. Additionally you can apply for **BAföG**, a state funded financial assistance scheme. This is a monthly allowance that you can obtain under certain circumstances – for example, if your family cannot adequately support you financially. You are required to repay half of this money after completing your studies. The other half is given to you as a gift. Various foundations and organisations also offer **scholarships**, especially for refugees. (*More information regarding the financing of university studies can be found under [finanzen.abi.de](https://www.abi.de/finanzen.abi.de).*)

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Or both combined?

There is also a special form of vocational training, the **dual study programme**. You concurrently complete training or practical experience in a company while studying. There are two forms: combined vocational training and study, whereby graduates receive a vocational training qualification and a degree. In the other variant, practical experience is gained within a company, but at the end you simply receive a university degree. Dual study programmes last between three and four and a half years. (*More information regarding dual study programmes can be found under [duales-studium.abi.de](https://www.abi.de/duales-studium.abi.de).*)

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Requirements

If you have brought your school diplomas from your home country you can have them recognised in Germany (more about recognition in step 4: What is my diploma worth?). If you are not yet allowed to study here you can make up for the Abitur via the **second educational path**. This can be done at night schools and colleges.

Even if you are qualified you still have to learn the German language. You can do this, for example, in a **language course** provided by the Federal Employment Agency or the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). Many universities also offer language courses and have created additional places in their **preparatory colleges** and other **preparatory courses** or **orientation programmes** (e.g. taster courses) to prepare refugees for admission to university. Depending on the university, a preparatory course lasts between six and twelve months.

More information

Contact points and important links

abi» Portal

Section "Studying": [studium.abi.de](https://www.studium.abi.de)

- [What to study?](#)

- [Where to study?](#)

- [How to study?](#)

Section "Training": [ausbildung.abi.de](https://www.ausbildung.abi.de)

<< Return to overview

>> Forward to step 2

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