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Study in Germany

interna
Ihr persönlicher Experte

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1.2. German Higher Education at a Glance

As mentioned before, there are basically three types of higher education institutes in Germany, that is universities, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), and colleges of art, music and film. In order to be able to select the most suitable institution for you, it is of utmost importance that you know what your study objectives are. Before you go on, pause for a moment and ask yourself these questions, unless you have already done so:

- Is this a first or second degree?
- Do I want a special type of degree?
- Do I want to study for a few semesters only without a degree?
- Do I want to specialize or choose a general subject area?
- Do I want a more academic or practical program?
- Do I want to study in German or English?
- What would my monthly financial resources be?

By answering these questions you will narrow down your choice of institution and program. Read the following brief description of higher education institutes and check the links provided for more detailed information to find out which profile best suits your targets.

If you hold a school leaving certificate (or equivalent) or a higher education entrance qualification and have the right to enroll at a university in your home country, then you are also allowed to take up a course of academic study in Germany as well. This will fall under the category of **First Degree Studies**, which means a complete program that will be concluded with a German degree, such as *Diplom*, *Magister* or *Staatsexamen*. Depending on your answers to the questions above, you will be able to find an appropriate degree course in your desired subject area. Just go to the following address, make your choice and search for those programs which correspond to your wishes:

www.daad.de (choose your language and go to Information for Foreigners/All about Studying – further information/University guide/First Degree Studies)

If you already hold a university degree awarded in your home country such as a Bachelor's Degree and would like to take up a further course of academic study in Germany, you will have to look for **Graduate Studies**. Go to the following address and search for the desired program and degree in the language of your choice: www.daad.de (choose your language and go to Information for Foreigners/All about Studying – further information/University guide/Graduate Studies)

Here is a brief description of what universities, universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), and colleges of art, music and film are, the differences between them and what they offer.

Universities are institutions which offer the complete range of academic subjects. Traditionally, they provide more academic and theoretical education and training, but also pursue research, according to the principle of the “indivisibility of research and teaching”. One consequence therefore, is a longer studying period that in other countries.

German universities have developed into comprehensive institutions, with faculties, colleges and schools offering a broad range of interdisciplinary studies such as medicine, science, engineering, arts and humanities, law, theology, economics and social sciences, and agriculture and forestry. Along state-maintained institutions, there are also several private universities, which charge tuition of course, and some other universities maintained by different secular or religious institutions.

There are other institutions that have university status and offer programs and studies with a very specific focus. Some examples are the *Deutsche Sporthochschule* in Cologne which specializes in sport, the *Kunsthochschule für Medien* in Munich, which trains experts in art and media, or the *Medizinische Hochschule und Tierärztliche Hochschule* in Hanover with its schools of medical and veterinary science.

Tip:

If you are considering a private university as an option too, carefully check and make sure that it is an accredited institution, i. e. the study itself and the degree are recognized by both the German and your home Education Ministry/Department. Although such a program may be very good, unless the university is accredited the degree will not be recognized on the labor market!

Universities award the academic degrees of Diplom and Magister Artium as well as the doctorate. They have the right to confer the habilitation, the professorial teaching qualification, and can qualify university professors. The new Higher Education Act (HRG) allows for new opportunities for completing degree courses with internationally compatible qualifications, i. e. Bachelor's and Master's degrees. For more information go to the following address:

www.daad.de (choose your language and go to Information for Foreigners/Higher Education Institutions in Germany/Type of university/ Universities)

Universities of Applied Sciences, or *Fachhochschulen* as they are called in German, are a German specialty which has evolved in the higher education system since the late 1960s. They are especially popular with foreign students and more than a quarter of all students in Germany attend a *Fachhochschule* (FH). In some states they are called vocational academies because they closely collaborate with corporations and are more focused on industry's needs, the curriculum is more practically oriented and, as a rule, the degree is obtained in three years.

The organization of these courses is tighter, the number of students in workgroups is smaller, semester vacations are shorter than at universities, and examinations take place throughout the studies and count for the final degree. A purely theoretical degree course will not be found at a FH. The academic here is closely knit together with research, a fact which is re-

flected in the type of subjects offered such as business administration, engineering, design, social services, computer and information science, mathematics, archive, library and documentation studies, nutrition and household management, agricultural and forestry science, building restoration, navigation and nautical science as well as translating and interpretation.

Another very important fact that accounts for the popularity of the FHs is that, in contrast to the universities, they will try to practically meet the needs of the businesses and industries in the respective regions. Therefore, it is not unusual for FHs to facilitate the transfer of technology from research into industrial practice. For this reason, FH graduates have far better chances on the labor market than their peers from universities, who have studied the same subjects.

There are more than 150 Fachhochschulen all over Germany which offer students a broad range of possibilities. They are mainly financed by the federal state in which they are found and will often offer degree courses and degrees that will meet some needs of the respective state. However, despite the somewhat regional character, many FHs have cooperation agreements with foreign institutions of higher education meant to promote student exchange and some now even offer additional Diplomas and Certificates or degree courses with integrated periods of study abroad. For more information go to:

www.daad.de (choose your language and go to Information for Foreigners/Higher Education Institutions in Germany/Type of university/Universities of Applied Science)

Tip:

Check if you have similar higher education institutions in your home country. If not, what would a year or a degree from a German FH mean back in your country? You can find this information either at your home university's International/Mobility Office or visit the official website of your home Education Ministry/Department.

Study in Germany

Colleges of art, music or film are also part of the portfolio of many universities and *Fachhochschulen*. They offer degree courses in film and media, performing arts, fine art, design and music. If you are interested in television and film, be it behind or in front of the camera, then there are plenty of possibilities in German universities for you. Universities and FHs in Hamburg, Munich, Dortmund, Cologne, Bielefeld or Leipzig, among others, offer graduate and postgraduate degree courses in fields such as film and television studies, screenplay, production management, directing, camera direction/camera, media design, prose, lyric drama/new media, or information technology. To qualify for admission, some universities require a first degree in an academic or artistic subject. For artistic degree courses, applicants will be expected to pass an aptitude test. Highly talented candidates may be accepted without a previous degree.

Universities and colleges of music and theater like the FH Hamburg, FH Heidelberg, FH Magdeburg, or the Pop Academy in Mannheim offer various courses in this area. These range from acting or directing to classical or pop music. The *Fachhochschulen* in Hannover, Kiel or Mainz, among others, offer degree courses, postgraduate degree courses or summer schools in fine arts. Other universities and FHs in particular, offer a wide range of degree courses in the field of design. In Essen, Wuppertal or Kassel, among others, you can also choose programs in industrial and product design respectively, as well as in visual communication or interior design. For more general information see: www.daad.de (choose your language and go to Information for Foreigners/Higher Education Institutions in Germany/Type of university/Colleges of art, music or film)

Tip:

You can find a ranking of universities with more details about the fields and degrees offered, useful feedback on descriptions of facilities and resources, research possibilities, staff reputation, professors' tips, study duration and students' feedback, as well as a gene-