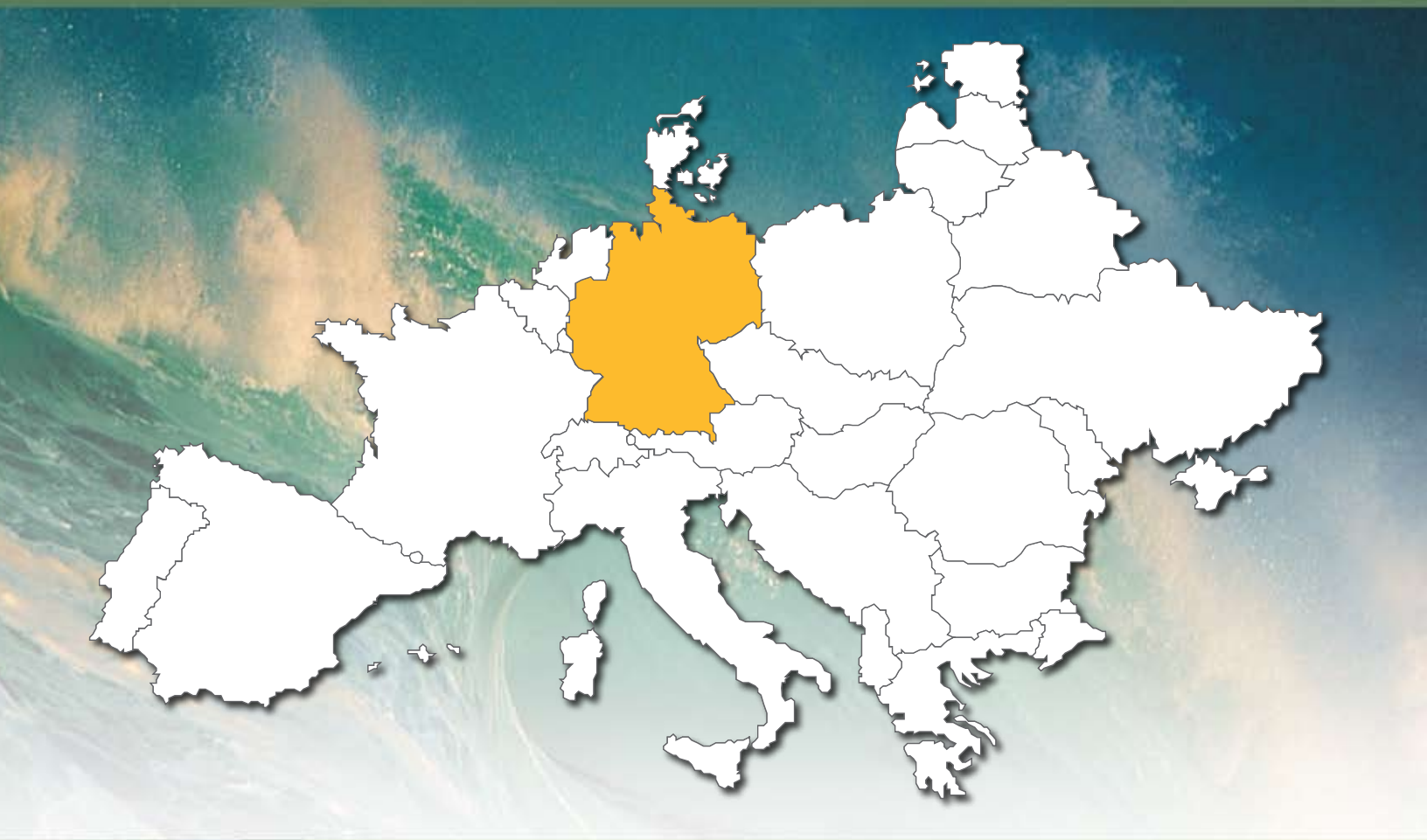


Online Guide to

# Educational Systems



Around the World—Germany



**NAFSA**

Association of  
International Educators

Submitted by Majka Drewitz  
December 2008

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In 1948, NAFSA pioneered the concept of providing professional services for postsecondary exchange students. Early efforts to enhance living and learning environments for exchange students have blossomed into today's active association of accomplished professionals whose numbers continue to grow worldwide.

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# Instructions for Using the *Online Guide to Educational Systems Around the World*

Susan Whipple, Editor

December 2008

These documents are updates to those in the 1999 publication *A Guide to Educational Systems Around the World* (which was an update to *The Handbook on the Placement of Foreign Graduate Students*, published in 1990 and colloquially known as the "Graduate Handbook.")

**It is important to note that these documents do not replace either of the earlier publications, which should be used for credentials issued prior to 1999, the period those publications cover.**

Readers familiar with the original version of *A Guide to Educational Systems Around the World* will note that these updates use the same format:

1. Each of these publications provides lists of credentials and other data that can be used both for undergraduate and graduate admissions.
2. "Advice for admissions officers" is intentionally not provided. We have attempted to avoid all types of subjective interpretation, relying instead on objective data. Users of these updates should use the information provided in conjunction with other resources to determine their own placement recommendations and possibility of transfer credit. Questions about credentials can be posted on the Admission and Credential Evaluation discussion forum on the Recruitment, Admissions, and Preparation Knowledge Community Web site:  
[http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge\\_community\\_network.sec/recruitment\\_admissions/admissions\\_and\\_credential/forums](http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge_community_network.sec/recruitment_admissions/admissions_and_credential/forums).

Please note that these updates should be supplemented by additional written materials that describe complete foreign educational systems, including data on specific institutions, and by professional training in the theory and practice of credential evaluation. Many of these resources are available from NAFSA, either as printed publications or on-line. The need for institution support for budgetary resources and training for undergraduate and graduate admissions personnel remains important, regardless of the increased availability of resources on the Web.

These publications were compiled by many authors using a standardized template and style. Although minor variations among entries do occur, the basic guidelines are explained as follows:

## Educational Ladder

1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2  
1 - 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |  
A B B

The year or half-year at which a credential is awarded is the point at which the corresponding credential letter is placed. In the example above, credential A is awarded after the 9th year of education. Note that the corresponding letter is placed directly below the number 9.

All *normal* possibilities of the total number of years of education that a credential might require are indicated on the ladder. This occurs for credential B, in which the credential can be awarded after either 12 or 13 total years of education. An explanation is provided in the description of the credential whenever a letter appears on the ladder more than once. There are a few cases when this multiple-listing style was not used; in these cases, there are explanatory comments.

An arrow (→) is used after a credential letter in cases where no maximum length of study for a particular program is specified, or where the study time is open-ended. For example, a doctor of philosophy degree program may require a minimum of three years of enrollment. The corresponding credential letter with an arrow will appear under the minimum number of total years of education required to earn the Ph.D.

## Explanations About Documents

Credentials are divided into two categories: secondary and postsecondary. The decision to include the credential under one or the other category is not a subjective one—a credential is determined to be either secondary or postsecondary according to its designation by the country of origin, regardless of how individual institutions might perceive the level (and recommend transfer credit).

Numerical endnotes, placed directly after the complete list of credentials, are used when a lengthy explanation about a credential is necessary.

## Foreign Terms and Words

Foreign terms are used whenever possible, and are translated literally, in most cases. Literal translations are used to avoid subjectivity. We have attempted to be consistent with translations across languages, though readers may notice some differences between countries because of preferences indicated by the submitters. Credential evaluators and admissions personnel should always rely on official foreign language documents, using translations only as guides.

## Grading Information

Only the most common grading scales used in each country are listed. Evaluators understand that variations in grading are common and that one should always consult the grading information that may be provided on official transcripts. Rather than making grade equivalency statements, the submitter(s) of the update provided information regarding grading practices within the countries.

# GERMANY

## YEARS OF EDUCATION

1→6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
			A	B		C	C	KJ	J	M	MN	OO	X	2	2			
				D	D	D	D	K	L	N	M	NO	PP	Z	5→			
						E	E		M	SN	OP	QQ	1					
					F	F	F		N	O	P	Q	RU	2				
					G	G	G		S	S	QS	SV	3					
						H	I			T	R	T	X					
						I	K			2	S	U	Z	Y				
										T	V	2	1					
										2	Y	2						
											1	3						
											2	4→						

## CREDENTIALS OR DOCUMENTATION

### Secondary

#### Sekundar I (Secondary Level I; Lower Secondary) Credentials:

- A** *Abschlusszeugnis*<sup>1</sup> (Completion Certificate) from a *Hauptschule* (Main School).
- B** *Abschlusszeugnis*<sup>1</sup> (Completion Certificate) from a *Realschule* (Middle School). Alternative terminology includes *Realschulabschluss* (Middle School Completion), *Abschlusszeugnis der Mittelschule* (Completion Certificate from a Middle School) [in Sachsen]. These are commonly referred to as *Mittlere Reife* (Middle Maturity or Intermediate Maturity). Some *Hauptschulen* (Main Schools) offer *10 Schuljahr* (10<sup>th</sup> School Year), an additional year of study leading to Middle Maturity.

#### Sekundar II (Secondary Level II; Upper Secondary) Vocational Credentials:

- C** *Abschlusszeugnis*<sup>1</sup> (Completion Certificate) from a *Berufsschule* (Vocational School), a vocational school offering part-time in-class instruction combined with part-time on-the job training known as the *duales System* (Dual System), confirms completion of two to three years of study requiring credential **B** or equivalent for admission.
- D** *Abschlusszeugnis*<sup>1</sup> (Completion Certificate) from a *Berufsfachschule* (Vocational Specialty School), a combined general and vocational full-time upper secondary school, confirms completion of one to three years of study requiring credential **A** or **B** for admission
- E** *Prüfungszeugnis* (Examination Certificate) from a local *Industrie- und Handelskammer* (Chamber of Industry and Commerce), *Handwerkkammer* (Chamber of Skilled Trades), or other occupational regulatory body, confirms completion of the practical component of the “dual system” of vocational education (see credential C). It is not considered an academic credential.

#### Continuing Vocational Education:

- F** *Abschlusszeugnis*<sup>1</sup> (Completion Certificate) confirming a *Berufsbezeichnung* (Occupational Title), or *Urkunde über die Erlaubnis zur Führung der*

*Berufsbezeichnung* ... (Certificate of Licensure to Use the Occupational Title of...), from a *Fachschule* (Specialty School) offering continuing vocational training for students who are trained in a recognized occupation, confirms completion of one to three years of study requiring credential **B** and prior relevant vocational training for admission. The most popular fields of study are agricultural economics, design, technology, business, social work and the caring professions e.g. nursing and physiotherapy.

- G** Title of *staatlich geprüfte / staatlich geprüfter* (State-Examined) or *staatlich anerkannte / staatlich anerkannter* (State-Approved; State-Certified) in a given paraprofessional occupation, confirms occupational licensure based on successfully completed training at a vocational school or other vocational training facility (see credentials D or F). It is not considered an academic credential.

Sekundar II (Secondary Level II; Upper Secondary) Higher Education Admission Credentials:

- H** *Abschlusszeugnis*<sup>1</sup> (Completion Certificate) or *Zeugnis* (Certificate) confirming the *Fachhochschulreife* (University of Applied Sciences Maturity) from a *Fachoberschule* (Specialty Upper Secondary School) or from a *Berufsfachschule* (Vocational Specialty School) after attendance at special extensive courses, confirms completion of two years of study requiring credential **B** or equivalent for admission; gives access to *Fachhochschule* (University of Applied Sciences) programs.
- I** *Zeugnis der allgemeinen Hochschulreife* (Certificate of General University Maturity), also known as the *Abitur*, from a *Gymnasium* (Grammar School) after completion of the final stage of *Gymnasium* education, i.e. the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* (Upper Level of the Grammar School), gives access to university education in all fields of study. Currently, the *Gymnasium* education sector in Germany is undergoing restructuring from the former Western German 9-year system known as *G9* (representing completion of nine years of education following a four-year primary school) to an 8-year system known as *G8*. Eight-year *Gymnasium* education is being introduced gradually, following individual state reforms. The earliest *G8* legislation was passed in 1999 in *Bayern* (Bavaria) in selected schools. The most recent was passed in 2008/09 in *Rheinland-Pfalz* where the nine-year *Gymnasium* is preferred but the eight-year curriculum is being available through intensive *Ganztagschulen* (All-Day Schools). Two former Eastern German states, *Sachsen* (Saxony) and *Thüringen* (Thuringia) never adopted the Western nine-year *Gymnasium* system. Both of these states continue to offer a 12-year system of primary and secondary education. The federally-required minimum of instruction hours for all *Gymnasium* programs (both *G9* and *G8*) is 265 hours. An alternate route geared toward foreign applicants whose educational credentials do not qualify them for university entry in Germany is available through a one-year program of study at a *Studienkolleg* (Study College) leading to a *Zeugnis über die bestandene Feststellungsprüfung* (Certificate of Passed Assessment Examination).
- J** *Zeugnis der fachgebundenen Hochschulreife* (Certificate of Subject-Restricted University Maturity) from a *Berufsoberschule* (Vocational Upper Secondary School), *Berufsgymnasium* (Vocational University-Preparatory School), or a *Fachgymnasium* (Specialty University-Preparatory School), confirms completion of two years of study requiring credential **C** or equivalent for admission; gives access to university education only in selected fields of study.

## Postsecondary

- K** *Diplomvorprüfung* (Pre-Diploma Examination), *Vordiplom* (Pre-Diploma), *Zeugnis der Zwischenprüfung* (Certificate of Intermediate Examination), or *Zwischenprüfungszeugnis* (Intermediate Diploma Examination Certificate), confirms completion of four semesters of study in a *Grundstudium* (Basic Study Stage) requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission. In *Fachhochschule* programs, it confirms completion of two to four semesters of study requiring credential **H** for admission. It gives access to the *Hauptstudium* (Main Study Stage) which is the second and final stage of a degree program.
- L** Until 2005: *Diplom - ... (BA)* [Graduate ... (University of Cooperative Education)] , e.g. *Diplom-Sozialwirt* (Graduate Social Economist), from a *Berufsakademie* (Vocational Academy, also known as University of Cooperative Education), confirms completion of a three-year combined academic and on-the-job training program known as the *duales System* (Dual System) requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission. It is offered in nine states (*Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Hamburg, Hessen, Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein, Saarland, and Thüringen*). Not all institutions named *Akademie* (Academy) belong to this category; their status as an institution may belong to a different category such as *Berufsfachschule* (see credential **D**).  
Since 2006: see credential **N**.
- M** *Diplom-...(FH)* [Graduate ... (University of Applied Sciences)], e.g. *Diplom-Kaufmann* [Graduate Businessman] from a *Fachhochschule* (University of Applied Sciences) or from a *Fachhochschule* division of a *Gesamthochschule* (Comprehensive University), confirms completion of six to nine semesters of study (including one or two semesters of internship practice) requiring credential **H** for admission.
- N** Bachelor of Arts / Engineering / Fine Arts / Music / Science from a *Fachhochschule* (University of Applied Sciences), a *Berufsakademie* (Vocational Academy) [since 2006], or from a *Universität* (University), *Technische Universität* (Technical University), a specialized *Hochschule* (University), e.g. *Pädagogische Hochschule* (Pedagogical University), confirms completion of six to eight semesters of study requiring credential **H** for admission to *Fachhochschule* programs and credentials **I** or **J** for admission to *Berufsakademie, Universität, or a specialized Hochschule* programs. Over 70% of all programs require six semesters of study. According to *Statistiken zur Hochschulpolitik 1/2008* report from the University Rectors Conference 67% (11.369) of all currently offered German degree programs lead to Bachelor or Master degrees (see credential **Y**).
- O** *Diplom-...* [Graduate ... ], e.g. *Diplom-Biologe / Diplom-Biologin* (Graduate Biologist) from a *Universität* (University), *Technische Universität* (Technical University), a specialized *Hochschule* (University), or the university division of a *Gesamthochschule* (Comprehensive University), confirms completion of eight to ten semesters of study requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission.
- P** *Magister Artium / Magistra Artium* (Master of Arts) from a *Universität* (University), confirms completion of nine (usually) to ten semesters of study requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission.
- Q** *Zeugnis* (Certificate) confirming one of the following: *Kirchliches Examen / Kirchliches Prüfung* (Ecclesiastical Examination), *Kirchliches Abschluss* (Ecclesiastical Graduation), or *Kirchlich-Theologische Prüfung* (Ecclesiastical - Theological Examination), confirms completion of nine to ten semesters of study requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission.

- R** *Zeugnis über die Erste juristische Staatsprüfung* (Certificate of the First Juridical State Exam), confirms completion of nine (usually) semesters of study in a professional law program requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission. Some institutions may also award a *Diplom-Jurist* (Graduate Jurist) or *Magister iuris* (Master of Law).
- S** *Zeugnis über die Erste Staatsprüfung für das Lehramt an ...* (Certificate of the First State Examination for Teaching at ... [type of school]) from a *Universität* (University) or *Pädagogische Hochschule* (Pedagogical University), confirms completion of six to nine semesters of study in a teacher training program requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission. The certificate leads to a temporary teaching license followed by a period of probationary teaching and non-credit in-service teacher training courses (see credential **1**). Most states (with the exception of *Saarland* and *Sachsen-Anhalt*) have recently introduced an experimental two-tiered Bachelor/Master structure in teacher education.
- T** *Zeugnis über die pharmazeutische Prüfung* (Certificate of the Pharmaceutical Examination), confirms completion of eight to nine semesters of study in a professional pharmacy program requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission.
- U** *Zeugnis über die tierärztliche Prüfung* (Certificate of the Veterinary Examination), confirms completion of ten semesters of study (including practical training plus six months for final examinations) in a professional veterinary medicine program requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission.
- V** *Zeugnis über die zahnärztliche Prüfung* (Certificate of the Dental Examination), confirms completion of ten semesters of study (including practical training plus six months for final examinations) in a professional dentistry program requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission.
- X** *Zeugnis über die ärztliche Prüfung* (Certificate of the Medical Examination), confirms completion of twelve semesters of study (including one year of practical training plus three months for final examinations) in a professional medicine program requiring credential **I** or **J** for admission.
- Y** Master of Arts / Engineering / Fine Arts / Music / Science, confirms completion of two to four semesters of study requiring credential **N** or equivalent for admission. Over 70% of all programs require four semesters of study based on credential **N**.
- Z** *Zeugnis über die Zweite juristische Staatsprüfung* (Certificate of Second Juridical State Examination), confirms completion of a two-year period of probationary practice and non-credit in-service legal training studies requiring credential **R** for admission. This certificate leads to a permanent legal practice license in Germany. It is not considered an academic credential.
- 1** *Zeugnis über die Zweite Staatsprüfung für das Lehramt an...* (Certificate of Second State Examination for Teaching at... [type of school]), confirms completion of a two-year period of probationary teaching and non-credit in-service teacher training courses requiring credential **S** for admission. This certificate leads to a permanent teaching license in Germany. It is not considered an academic credential.
- 2** *Zertifikat* or *Zeugnis* (Certificate) for completed *Aufbaustudien* (Postgraduate Studies), *Ergänzungsstudien* (Supplementary Studies), or *Zusatzstudien* (Additional Studies), confirms completion of two to four semesters of study requiring credential **L** through **X** for admission.
- 3** *Zeugnis über das Konzertexamen* (Certificate of Concert Examination) or *Künstlerische Abschlussprüfung* (Artistic Graduation Examination), confirms completion of four semesters of study in a postgraduate music performance program requiring credential **N** or **O** in a related music performance discipline for admission.

- 4 *Promotionsurkunde* (Doctoral Certificate) or diploma of *Doktor der ...wissenschaften* (Doctor of ...Sciences), confirms completion of advanced research resulting in a dissertation and final examination requiring credentials **O** through **Y** for admission. There is no prescribed length for the doctoral thesis completion. There are a number of institutions in Germany which admit holders of credentials **M** or **N** to their doctoral programs. In those cases, a specially-designed *Qualifizierungsstudium* (Qualifying Study Period) may be required prior to the commencement of the doctoral research activities.
- 5 *Habilitation* (Habilitation), confirms a period of two to ten years of advanced scholarly research requiring credential **4** for admission. It is required for professorship.

**Footnotes:**

- 1 Prior to the 1996 spelling reform words containing "ss" may have been spelled with "ß", e.g. *Abschlußzeugnis*.

## GRADING INFORMATION

**Secondary** (including final *Abitur* examinations from a *Gymnasium*):

Numeric	Abitur Numeric*	Description	Translation	Interpretation in Germany
1	13,14,15	sehr gut	very good	expectations exceeded
2	10,11,12	gut	good	expectations fully met
3	7,8,9	befriedigend	satisfactory	expectations met
4	4,5,6	ausreichend	sufficient**	expectations barely met
5	1,2,3	mangelhaft	unsatisfactory/poor	expectations not met but some basis for improvement
6	0	ungenügend	insufficient/fail	expectations not met and no basis for improvement

\* 15-point scale is used on the *Zeugnis der allgemeinen Hochschulreife* (Certificate of General University Maturity) which reports the final semester and *Abitur* examination grades in the last two years of the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* program. A *Durchschnittsnote* (cumulative grade average) for all relevant grades is reported according to the 6-point scale.

\*\* *Ausreichend* (sufficient) is considered the lowest passing grade required for promotion to the next grade. Only a *Durchschnittsnote* (cumulative grade average) between 1.00 and 4.00 (on the 6-point scale) on the *Abitur* examinations is considered for the university entry process.

## Postsecondary

General grading scale:

Numeric	Numeric with decimal fractions	Description	Translation	Interpretation in Germany
1	1.0 - 1.5	<i>sehr gut</i>	very good	expectations exceeded
2	1.6 - 2.5	<i>gut</i>	good	expectations fully met
3	2.6 - 3.5	<i>befriedigend</i>	satisfactory	expectations met

4	3.6 - 4.0	<i>ausreichend</i>	sufficient	expectations barely met
5	over 4.0	<i>ungenügend</i>	insufficient/fail	expectations not met and no basis for improvement

Law programs grading scale:

<b>Numeric</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Translation</b>
14.00 - 18.00	<i>sehr gut</i>	very good
11.50 - 13.99	<i>gut</i>	good
9.00 - 11.49	<i>vollbefriedigend</i>	fully satisfactory
6.50 - 8.99	<i>befriedigend</i>	satisfactory
4.00 - 6.49	<i>ausreichend</i>	sufficient
1.50-3.99	<i>mangelhaft</i>	unsatisfactory/poor
0.00-1.49	<i>ungenügend</i>	insufficient/fail

### **POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION RECOGNITION BODY**

Education and institutional recognition are regulated by each state (*Land*) in the Federal Republic of Germany. Each *Land* has its own ministry of education. For contact information see the “Resources” section below.

Bachelor and Master degree programs are regulated by an accreditation process carried out by the *Akkreditierungsrat* (Accreditation Council) overseen by the *Stiftung zur Akkreditierung von Studiengängen in Deutschland* (Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Programmes in Germany). For contact information see the “Resources” section below.

### **RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **Useful online resources:**

EURYDICE – The information network on education in Europe (in English) <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/Eurydice>, see the profile on German educational system by following a link to EURYBASE - The database on education systems in Europe:

<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/EuryPresentation>

*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* (University Rectors Conference)

<http://www.hrk.de/de/home/home.php> (also available in English at [http://www.hrk.de/index\\_eng.php](http://www.hrk.de/index_eng.php)); see *Hochschulkompass* (Higher Education Compass) database

*Akkreditierungsrat* (Accreditation Council) <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/> (also available in English at <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=44&L=1>)

*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung* (Federal Ministry of Education and Research) <http://www.bmbf.de/index.php> (also available in English at <http://www.bmbf.de/en/index.php>)

*Kultusministerkonferenz* (Cultural Ministers Conference)  
<http://www.kmk.org/index1.shtml>, see the list of addresses and websites of individual Ministries of Education <http://www.kmk.org/aufg-org/home.htm?adress>

German *Berufsakademien* <http://www.ba-bw.de/>

German *Studienkollegs* <http://www.studienkollegs.de/>

*Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst* [DAAD] (German Academic Exchange Service) <http://www.daad.de/en/index.html>

UNESCO-International Association of Universities country systems database  
<http://www.unesco.org/iau/onlinedatabases/index.html>

### **Publications:**

*Statistische Daten zur Einführung von Bachelor- und Masterstudiengängen* (Summer 2008) by the *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* (*Statistiken zur Hochschulpolitik 1/2008*):  
[http://www.hrk.de/de/download/dateien/HRK-Statistik\\_SoSe\\_2008\\_komplett.pdf](http://www.hrk.de/de/download/dateien/HRK-Statistik_SoSe_2008_komplett.pdf)

*Glossary on Education: Institutions, Examinations, Qualifications, Titles and other Specialist Terms* (explanations provided in English)  
[http://www.kmk.org/doku/Glossary\\_dt\\_engl.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/doku/Glossary_dt_engl.pdf)

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