



GUIDE TO THE GERMAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES IN COLOMBIA

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of National Education of Colombia (MEN) has been working, in recent years, on the construction of guides for the educational systems of different countries. These instruments aim to facilitate decision-making as to where and what to study abroad, as well as to guide the process and requirements for the validation of these degrees in Colombia.

The Directorate of Quality of Higher Education of the MEN made a diagnosis of the Guides of Educational Systems that are already published on the website. In the exercise carried out, the need to bring the technical language of education closer to the citizen was highlighted, as well as to generate an interactive instrument. In this order of ideas, the MEN and the Colombian Association of Universities – ASCUN, updated and redesigned the Educational Systems Guides.

For the construction of this guide, information from different official sources was consolidated, which allowed to offer a practical and relevant instrument for the citizen. We are especially grateful to the University of Potsdam and the Conference of German Rectors for their contribution to this document. It therefore ¹ includes relevant information on four central aspects: 1) the higher education system; (2) quality assurance of higher education institutions and programmes; (3) the legality of higher education programmes and institutions; and, 4) steps to initiate the process of validation of higher education degrees obtained abroad.

¹ Potsdam University (2021), Germany – Framework and conditions for Higher Education Management, Project HEPCoPA



All the information contained here includes the different accessibility requirements in Web tools and products, facilitating access to people with disabilities. This work was possible thanks to the invaluable teamwork of the National Institute for the Blind – INCI.

1. GERMAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Germany is a parliamentary federal republic, with a head of the Government (the Cancellor - and a head of state (the President - whose main responsibilities are representative (https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/germany_es). Since the reunification of 1990, the Federal Republic of Germany has been made up of 16 Federal States, which are collectively known as Länders (<https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/germany-europe/federal-states>). Each Länder has its own Constitution and enjoys high autonomy for its internal organization. Three of them, Bremen, Berlin and Hamburg, are City-States. The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany "Grundgesetz" (https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/) essentially assigns responsibility for educational and cultural affairs to Länders.

Education system in Germany

In the relationship between the Federation and Länders: "The responsibility of the education system in the Federal Republic of Germany is determined by the federal structure of the state. Unless the Basic Law grants legislative powers to the Federation, Länders have the right to legislate. Within the education system, this applies to the school sector, higher education, adult education and continuing education. Administration of the education system in these areas is an almost exclusive business of Länders. Detailed regulations are laid down in the constitutions of Länders. (...) When the Federation has any responsibility for education, science and research, this falls mainly into the Federal Ministry of Education and Research" (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF, our translation) https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Eurydice/Bildungswesen-engl-pdfs/dossier_en_ebook.pdf.



The Permanent Conference of Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK) coordinates educational practices at the national level. There is permanent cooperation between Länders and the authorities of the Federal Republic in monitoring the performance and effectiveness of the education system, as well as in relation to international and European cooperation in the fields of education, research and culture. This cooperation also extends to the analysis of the performance of the education system in an international comparative view, as well as in cooperation in the preparation of reports and recommendations in this regard.

In this sense, responsibility for education in Germany is shared between Länders and the Federation (which has a secondary role). There are some areas of cooperation in the field of education for which there is no such distinction between the two sides, known as "joint tasks" or "Gemeinschaftsaufgaben".

The German school system is divided into 5 levels: Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education, Tertiary Education and Continuing Education.

After 9 school years, a certificate of basic general education ("Hauptschulabschluss") can be obtained, which provides access to vocational schools or allows to continue with continuing secondary school and obtain a more advanced certificate in general education in the following year ("Realschulabschluss"). The latter grants access to vocational training or to several technical schools ("Fachoberschulen"), or to upper secondary school ("Oberstufe"). After 12 years, students can obtain the qualification of restricted entry to universities of applied sciences ("Fachhochschule"). Unrestricted entry qualification for all higher education institutions, including universities ("Abitur"), requires 13 years in most secondary schools. In some federal states, gymnasiums offer a fast track for universities ("Abitur") after 12 years ("G8 Abitur"). Adults without these entry certificates can still access higher education through lateral entry routes, based on a variety of previous professional certificates.



***Note: What is considered vocational education, adult education and lifelong learning in Germany?** Vocational education in Germany (also understood as vocational training in other countries) offers technical education after secondary education and has occupational purposes. Continuing education in Germany is education that aims to respond to the ever-changing demands of the labor market. This type of education is provided by municipal and private institutions, churches, trade unions, chambers of industry and commerce, associations, political parties, enterprises, public authorities, academies, family education centers, vocational schools, Fachschulen, radio, television and other institutions. Vocational and continuing education may be tertiary education, but it is not considered higher education in Germany.

For more general information about the education system in the Federal Republic of Germany, please go to the following link:

<https://www.kmk.org/zab/central-office-for-foreign-education/education-system-in-germany.html>

Higher Education Institutions in Germany

Germany has state and private higher education institutions with state accreditation, mainly divided into universities, universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) and schools of: education, theology, art and music, and public administration. Nearly three million students were enrolled in 422 higher education institutions in 2020/2021 (Federal Statistics Office, 2021: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Institutions-Higher-Education/_node.html).

Most higher education institutions, 306 HEIs in 2021, are funded by Länders themselves and are therefore under their regulatory control. The "Compass of Higher Education" of the



Conference of German Rectors (HRK), includes most of them, 272 (Compass of Higher Education HRK, 2021). For more information, please enter the following link:

https://www.hs-kompass.de/kompass/xml/index_en.htm

There are also higher education institutions run by private companies, foundations or religious associations (Protestant and Catholic churches), which are officially recognized by Länders (with state accreditation). In absolute numbers, there are 148 institutions, of which about 40 institutions are run by a religious association. Most higher education private institutions are applied sciences universities.

More than 90% of students in Germany are enrolled in state higher education institutions, and only a small percentage attend a private institution accredited by the state. Private institutions regularly charge high tuition fees, which is a major reason for the low share of students enrolled in such institutions. Students at state universities in Germany do not pay tuition fees, but relatively low administrative fees per semester, which usually covers the expenses associated with university cafeterias and public transport tickets.

Universities in Germany (108 in 2021) have some main characteristics, which differentiate them from other higher education institutions. In the German tradition, universities focus, in particular, on basic research, so that advanced stages of study have mainly a theoretical orientation and research-oriented components. In fact, universities and higher education institutions of equivalent status are the only institutions in Germany – with a few exceptions – entitled to confer doctorates and postdoctoral qualifications (qualification for the title of professor).

Consequently, universities have a larger workforce of academic staff than other institutions of higher education. Professors are usually chair holders and require a doctorate, as well as a habilitation or qualification equivalent to the habilitation. In terms of study programmes, universities generally offer a wide range of subjects and programmes that provide sound theoretical training and methodological expertise. Some programs with a strong theoretical



focus can only be studied at universities, such as studies in classical law, pharmacy, philosophy, or political science. In addition to teaching, universities also focus on research activities in specialized institutes, enabled by a strong research infrastructure and strong cooperation with research institutes outside the walls.

In addition, there are around 210 universities of applied sciences ("Fachhochschulen" or "Hochschulen für angewandte Wissenschaften") that are characterized by an application-oriented approach in teaching and research. There, professors need, in addition to their academic qualifications, professional experience outside the field of higher education. The purpose of their study programs is to gain scientific knowledge and simultaneously professional practice. This differentiates it from formal universities, which more often deal with theoretical topics in preparation for a scientific career. Universities of applied sciences generally offer more specialized and more practice-oriented programs of study, such as architecture, social work, or civil engineering that involve practical semesters, for example, in cooperation with companies. For students, this implies that courses for an undergraduate/ bachelor's degree do not last six, but seven or eight semesters. Usually, the "Fachhochschulen" do not have the right to award doctorates, but there are already a few exceptions. In addition, they focus on applied research and development projects rather than fundamental research.

Schools of education, theology, art and music, and public administration, are higher education institutions of equivalent status to universities.

Higher Education Compass is the database of the Association of Universities and Other Higher Education Institutions in Germany (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz - HRK) which provides information on recognized German higher education institutions and the courses they offer: (<https://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/study-in-germany.html>).

For more information, please enter the following link: <https://www.study-in-germany.de/en/>



Access to higher education in Germany for international students

Admission requirements for undergraduate/bachelor's degrees (first cycle):

Regular entry qualification: Admission to any course of study at equivalent universities and higher education institutions, as a rule, requires the "Allgemeine Hochschulreife" or the "Fachgebundene Hochschulreife". The first entitles those who finish school to study at any institution of higher education in any subject or field, while the second allows entry only to specific courses. There are different ways for the German population to obtain the admission.

In addition to the Hochschulreife, in certain subjects, the applicant's aptitude is determined by an independent test procedure. This applies particularly to sports and the arts (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bachelor-31_en).

Applicants without qualifications for admission to German higher education, for foreign

students: They must present a high school or middle school certificate that qualifies them to attend higher education in their home country. If necessary, they must also prove that they have passed an entrance examination at a university in their home country or proof of university enrolment. Applicants from some countries of origin must, in addition, demonstrate that they have successfully completed some modules of the course at a higher education institution in the country of origin or, after attending a one-year basic course, they must take an assessment test in a preparatory course "Studienkolleg".

Usually, the German language proficiency test is a prerequisite for application to a study program. According to the regulatory framework on German exams, to study in German higher education institutions (RO-DT), these specify the language requirements necessary for a course, on the basis of an average applicant but, for each study program, in each individual case. Thus, the role of the German language for a successful course of study takes



precedence. There are different official tests to demonstrate language skills. Through these exams, different levels of ability to undertake studies in German language can be demonstrated:

1. The German Language Diploma of the Permanent Conference - Level II (Deutsches Sprachdiplom der Kultusministerkonferenz - Zweite Stufe - DSD II).
2. The German language proficiency exam for Admission to higher education for foreign applicants (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang ausländischer Studienbewerber - DSH) which is taken at the higher education institution itself in Germany.
3. The German as a foreign language exam for foreign applicants (Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache für ausländische Studienbewerber - TestDaF).
4. The German exam as part of the Feststellungsprüfung (assessment test) in a Studienkolleg.

In addition, the RO-DT regulates the conditions under which applicants are exempt from the test of ability to study in the language of instruction.

There are additional admission requirements for art and music schools, as well as for the "Fachhochschulen". Other establishments offer tertiary education, but it is not higher education. They also particular requirements (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bachelor-31_en).

Admission requirements for master's degrees (second cycle):

The admission requirement for a master's course of study is, as a rule, a higher education degree that allows access to a profession. Under Länder's higher education laws, there are clearly defined exceptional cases and, for artistic master's degrees, an entrance examination may replace the requirement of a higher education degree. For quality assurance purposes or for reasons of capacity, additional admission requirements may be established. Länders may reserve the right to approve the admission requirements.



Admission to master's degrees also requires evidence of qualified employment for a period of not less than one year, as a rule.

For admission to artistic master's degrees, the special artistic aptitude required must be demonstrated. This can also be done through a special aptitude test.

For second cycle programmes that are outside the master's structure (e.g. Diploma, Master's degree, Church and State qualifications, State examinations "Staatsprüfung"), as well as other postgraduate studies, please visit https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/programmes-outside-bachelor-and-master-structure-31_en.

Admission requirements for the doctorate (third cycle):

The disciplines in which it is possible to obtain a doctorate at universities and equivalent higher education institutions in Germany can be consulted in the compass of higher education offered by the Conference of German Rectors: <https://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/study-in-germany.html>.

The paths to a PhD in Germany are varied. The leading model in Germany is the individually supervised Doctorate. Structured PhD programmes are also becoming increasingly important. Doctoral studies are completed, as a rule, at universities or equivalent institutions of higher education, to some extent in cooperation with non-university research institutes and Fachhochschulen. Obtaining a PhD in a Fachhochschule is only possible in exceptional cases (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/third-cycle-phd-programmes-31_en).

Admission to doctoral studies is regulated by the higher education laws of Länders and by the doctoral regulations ("Promotionsordnungen") of higher education institutions entitled to award a Doktorgrad. Master's degrees obtained at equivalent universities and higher



education institutions, or at Fachhochschulen, always entitle the start of doctoral studies. Passing the Erste Staatsprüfung (first state examination) also entitles start of doctoral studies.

Those who have only the undergraduate/bachelor's degree, and are specially qualified, can also be admitted directly to doctoral studies without having previously obtained an additional degree, through a procedure to determine their aptitude. Higher education institutions entitled to award a Doktorgrad shall regulate the admission and organization of the procedure for determining aptitude in their doctoral regulations. In addition to their respective degree, students must complete preparatory academic studies in the subjects to be taken at doctoral level and/or a complementary period of studies at the university in question, or they must take an aptitude test (Promotionseignungsprüfung).

Master's degrees obtained in the faculties of art and music entitle graduates to undertake doctoral studies if the master's course of studies provides a sufficient qualification.

The Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) offers a guide to support study decision-making in Germany: <https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/plan-your-studies/applying/>.

Admission requirements for medicine and medical specializations:

To study medicine differs, in many respects, from other study programmes in Germany, as it has stricter application requirements (excellent qualifications in previous education). Medical education is provided only in German language. Therefore, the requirements of handling this language must be satisfied. The M-course should be performed in a Studienkolleg, which prepares candidates to study medicine. Additionally, although it is not integrated into the bachelor/master's system, it includes a state examination (Staatsexamen).



There are 43 medical universities in Germany, only 4 of them being private (<https://www.mygermanuniversity.com/articles/medical-universities-in-germany>). In Germany, 5% of study places at each university are reserved for foreign students from outside the European Union.

Titles and degrees

Undergraduate/Bachelor's degree – First cycle or first qualification of German higher education

The first higher education qualification in Germany is the bachelor's degree or, as it is known in Colombia, the undergraduate. The standard period of study "Regelstudienzeit" in an undergraduate program is 6 to 8 semesters, or 3 to 4 full academic years.

There are different undergraduate degrees, among which are undergraduate degrees in Arts (B.A.), Science (B.Sc.), Engineering (B. Ing.), Law (LL.B.), Fine Arts (B.F.A.), Arts (B.A.), Music (B. Mus.) or Education (B.Ed.).

Undergraduate fields of study at German universities and equivalent institutions

These institutions are renowned for providing the widest range of courses of study, compared to other institutions offering tertiary education. The courses of study offered by German universities and equivalent institutions are as follows:

- **Languages, Humanities and Sport**: Philosophy, Theology, Archaeology and the Study of Antiquity, History, Art Studies/Art History, Musicology/Music History, Theatre Studies/Drama, European and Non-European Languages and Literature, Education, Psychology, Librarianship/Documentation/Media Studies, Sport.



- Law, Economics and Social Sciences: Law, Social Sciences, Administrative Sciences, Economics, Political Science.
- Mathematics and Natural Sciences: Mathematics, Physics, Computer Science, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Biology, Earth Sciences, Pharmacy.
- Medicine: Human Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine.
- Agronomy, Forestry and Nutrition Sciences: Agronomy, Forestry, Nutrition Science.
- Engineering Sciences: Architecture, Civil Engineering, Geodesy, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Traffic and Transport Studies, Environmental Technology, Mining.

International undergraduate programs offered by German universities and equivalent institutions are mainly focused on: Languages and Humanities; Law, Economics and Social Sciences; and Engineering Sciences.

Exams for professional practice:

- State Exam - Staatsprüfung: For some programs, a state exam must be conducted, evidencing the preparation of students for a particular profession of importance to the public interest. This is the case of medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, food chemistry, law and, to some extent, teaching (education). Such professions cannot be exercised without passing a two-stage exam, conducted by state examiners and academic professors.
 - Kirchliche und akademische Prüfung: For students who have completed a 5-year study program in Theology, they have to sit for a Church and academic exam, before practicing the profession in jobs as a priest or pastoral assistant.
1. Abschlussprüfung or Konzertexamen: Some graduate programs offered by German schools of art and music (and in a few cases by universities) are completed with the final exam "Abschlussprüfung" or a concert exam "Konzertexamen".



Undergraduate fields of study at German universities of applied sciences

Regularly, the undergraduate fields of study at German universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulens) are:

- Agronomy, Forestry and Nutrition Sciences.
- Engineering Sciences.
- Economics/Economic Law.
- Social work.
- Public Administration, Administration of Justice.
- Information Technology, Computer Science and Mathematics.
- Natural sciences.
- Design.
- Information and Communication Studies.
- Nursing and Management in the Public Health System.

The international bachelor's degree programmes on which German universities of applied sciences usually focus are: Law, Economics and Social Sciences; and Engineering Sciences.

Master's degree – Second cycle or second German higher education qualification

It takes two to four semesters to complete studies in a German master's program. In universities and equivalent institutions, as well as in art and music schools, this period is mainly four semesters. In Fachhochschulen this period is 3-4 semesters.

To complete a master's degree, students must achieve 300 Credit Points from the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), including points received for the above qualification. There are some master's programmes with a total standard study period of six years, requiring a total of 360 ECTS points.



For more information, please enter the following link:

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en

Some of the degrees that can be received upon completion of a German master's degree at universities or equivalent institutions are in Arts (M.A.), Science (M.Sc.), Engineering (M. Ing.), Law (LL.M.) and Education (M.Ed.).

The degrees that can be received by completing a German master's degree in art and music schools are in Fine Arts (M.F.A.), arts (M.A.) or Music (M.Mus.).

The degrees that can be received upon completion of a German master's degree in universities of applied sciences are in Arts (M.A.), in Science (M.Sc.), in Engineering (M. Ing.) or in Law (LL.M.).

There are master's degrees that can be received by completing a continuing/specialized education, such as in Business Administration (MBA).

Master's Exam: Some other programs are completed by taking a Master's exam in a combined subject of study, leading to a Master's degree, such as "Magister of Atrium". The Master's degree is comparable to a Master's degree.

German higher education programs outside the undergraduate/bachelor's and master's level

- Exam - Diploma: Some programs are completed by taking an exam in a single subject of study, leading to a Diploma degree, i.e., Diploma in Psychology or Engineering. If the Diploma is issued by the University of Applied Sciences, it usually contains the phrase "FH" included. A Diploma issued by Universities of Applied Sciences is



comparable to undergraduate/bachelor's degree. The Diploma issued by a university corresponds to the Master's level.

- Postgraduate study courses - complementary and follow-up courses of study: After completing a first degree, there is the option of undertaking additional studies of one- or two-years period in support of existing studies, or specializing in a specific field of study. These are known as graduate study courses.

Doctorate – Third cycle or third German higher education qualification

The PhD is a programme that is adopted by the most qualified students and can be taken at German universities and equivalent institutions, in collaboration with non-university research institutes. There is no standardized period to complete doctoral studies, as this is a deeper and more individual specialization.

German doctoral studies include:

- Independent research.
- Oral examination "Rigorousum"/defense of the doctoral thesis "Disputation"

There are several paths to obtain a PhD in Germany, as follows:

- Individual and supervised doctorate.
- Structured doctoral program.

The degree received upon completion of a German doctoral study program is Doctor "Doktorgrad".

* **Undergraduate, medical specializations and residencies:**



An undergraduate course in medicine regularly lasts six years and three months, and is completed with the state examination (Staatsexamen), with which a license to practice as a doctor is obtained (approval).

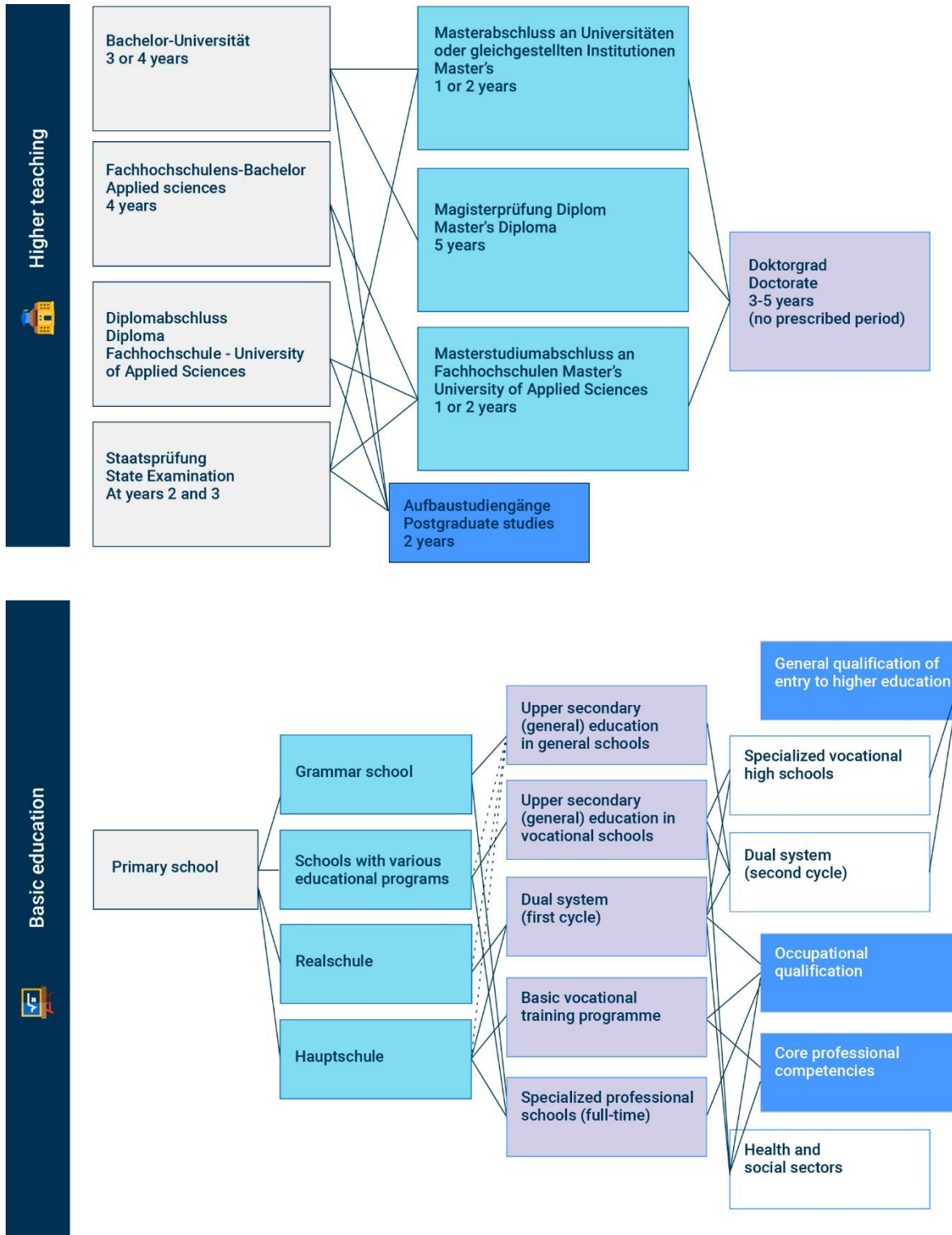
Medical studies culminating with graduation with the state exam are followed by a practical phase of up to 6 years in which the student trains as a specialist in a certain medical field (Facharzt) and ends with another exam. This training concludes with the specialized medical examination. It is an specialization in a medical thematic field based on practical work as a resident in a medical institution relevant to the chosen specialty. It includes a specialized medical examination (Facharztprüfung) performed by the state medical association (Landesärztekammer).

The regulation that normalizes these studies is called Approbationsordnung. It was revised and modified in 2002, adapting it to rules created by the European Union.

For more information, please enter the following link:
<https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/themen/gesundheitswesen/gesundheitsberufe/aerzte/approbationsordnung.html>.



Structure of Germany's education system





Based on: OCDE, 2020

To check the graph approved by the German government for the entire system and used by the OECD, please enter the following links: <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Germany-2020.pdf>
https://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/DEU/DEU_2011_EN.pdf

Comparative table of educational levels in Germany and Colombia

It is important to know the particularities of each of the educational levels, both in Germany and in Colombia. Therefore, a comparative analysis of both systems is presented in the following table, where reference is made to the highest levels of higher education:

- Level 8: PhD level or equivalent.
- Level 7: Master's level, specialization or equivalent.
- Level 6: Degree in tertiary education or equivalent level.
- Level 5: Short cycle tertiary education.

Comparative chart: educational levels in Germany and Colombia.

UNESCO - ISCED LEVELS	NAMING OF LEVELS GERMANY	NUMBER OF YEARS	NAMING OF LEVELS COLOMBIA	NUMBER OF YEARS
8	Doktorgrad (Doctorate)	3-5	Doctorate	4-5
7	Facharztausbildung Specialist training / residency	4-8	Medical-surgical specialization	1-5
7	Masterabschluss an Universitäten oder gleichgestellten Institutionen	1-2		2



UNESCO - ISCED LEVELS	NAMING OF LEVELS GERMANY	NUMBER OF YEARS	NAMING OF LEVELS COLOMBIA	NUMBER OF YEARS
	(Master's degree in universities or equivalent institutions)		Master's	
7	Masterabschluss an Kunst- und Musikhochschulen (Master's Degree in Art and Music Schools)	1-2		
7	Masterabschluss an Fachhochschulen (Master's Degree in Universities of Applied Sciences)	1-2		
7	Masterabschluss durch Absolvierung einer Weiterbildung/Fachausbildung (Master's degree completing a specialized continuing education)	1-2		
7	Diplom – University (Diploma)	5		
7	Magisterprüfung (Master's Exam)	5		
6	Aufbaustudiengänge (Postgraduate courses)	2	University specialization	1
6	Bachelor-Universität (Undergraduate/Bachelor's degree in German universities and equal institutions)	3-4	University Professional	4-5
6	Fachhochschulens-Bachelor (Undergraduate /Bachelor's Degree in German Universities of Applied Sciences)	3-4		
6	Fachschulen-Bachelor (Undergraduate /Bachelor's Degree in Continuing Vocational Training)			
6	Berufsakademie-Bachelor	2		



UNESCO - ISCED LEVELS	NAMING OF LEVELS GERMANY	NUMBER OF YEARS	NAMING OF LEVELS COLOMBIA	NUMBER OF YEARS
	(Undergraduate /Bachelor's Degree in Professional Academies)			
6	Diplomabschluss (Diploma)	5		
6	Zertifikat der Handels- und Fachschule (Commercial and Technical School Certificate)	3		
5	Zertifikat der Handels- und Fachschule (Commercial and Technical School Certificate)	2	Technological specialization	<1
5			Technical specialization	1
5			Tecnólogo	3
5			Professional technician	2

Based on: <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Germany-2020.pdf>

It is important to highlight the measure of time corresponding to educational levels and its comparison with respect to international standards:

- In both Colombia and Germany, the estimated time of academic activity of the student depending on the academic competencies that the program is expected to develop, is expressed in units called Academic Credits.

Academic credit in Colombia: it is a unit of measurement of the student's academic work that indicates the effort to be made to achieve the results of learning. It is equivalent to forty-eight (48) hours during an academic period. Institutions shall determine the share between the direct relationship with the teacher and the independent practice of the student, justified according to the training process and the learning outcomes foreseen for



the program. Institutions must express in academic credits all training activities that are part of the curriculum (Decree 1330 of 2019, article 2.5.3.2.4.1).

Academic credit in Germany: It is based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), agreed by the European Commission, that "60 ECTS credits are the equivalent of a full year of study or work. In a standard academic year, these credits are usually divided into several smaller modules. A typical 'short cycle qualification' usually includes 90-120 ECTS credits." A "first cycle" (or undergraduate/bachelor's degree) degree consists of 180 or 240 ECTS credits. Usually, a 'second cycle' (or master's degree) is equivalent to 90 to 120 ECTS credits. In Germany, ECTS is not used at the "third cycle" or at the doctoral level.

- The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a frame of reference for collecting, compiling and analyzing internationally comparable statistics in the field of education (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isced>).



2 LEGALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND INSTITUTIONS

The German Constitution, the so-called Basic Law (<https://www.btg-bestellservice.de/pdf/80206000.pdf>), includes some fundamental principles for the university system:

- Article 5(3) guarantees freedom of research and teaching. For universities, this means that each professor and researcher can freely generate research results and is free in the choice of scientific methods and theories and in the imparting of knowledge within the limits of the constitution and his employment contract. Universities should give them the minimum resources to do their job and to be part of the community in their field.
- Article 30 derives the cultural sovereignty of the 16 German states. The states oversee the public school system (cf. 1.1) and the higher education system (S.E.). Therefore, public universities are entities of the German regional states. Each of the 16 German states (Länders) has its separate S.E. law.
- In addition, by constitution, vocational choice is guaranteed as an individual right of each citizen (article 12). Related to this, for young people who decide to study at a university, the state has an obligation to provide as many university places as possible.

As mentioned, the legal basis of higher education in Germany is provided for by the higher education legislation of Länders (Hochschulgesetze), as well as by the legislation concerning art and music schools of the Länders insofar as these types of institutions are not included in the general higher education laws. As part of the concurrent legislation (article 74, paragraph 1, No. 33, in conjunction with article 72 of the Basic Law), the Federation is responsible for the areas of admission to higher education institutions and the degrees they grant. However, Länders are entitled to enact their own provisions in contravention of the relevant federal laws (paragraph 3 No. 6 of Article 72 of the Basic Law). Higher Education



Laws of Länders describe the general objectives of higher education institutions, as well as the general principles underlying the higher education system, teaching and research, admission, membership and participation, as well as the staff of higher education institutions. As a rule, regulations apply to all higher education institutions, including private establishments, and provide a systematic framework for the higher education sector (Laws and regulations most relevant to higher education in Germany).

Legal rules of higher education of each Länder and links to more information

Länder	Higher education Acts	Link for more information on higher education in each Länder
Baden-Wurtemberg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law on Higher Education Institutions of Baden-Württemberg (Landeshochschulgesetz – LHG: Art. 1 of the Third Law Amending the Higher Education Regulations); Vom 01.04.2014 (GBl. Baden-Württemberg 2014,6, S. 99 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 13.03.2018 (GBl. Baden-Württemberg 2018,5, p. 85 et seq.) 	
Baviera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bavarian Higher Education Act (BayHSchG); Vom 23.05.2006 (GVBl. Bayern 2006,10, S. 818 ff.), zul. modified. by ordinance of 26.03.2019 (GVBl. Bayern 2019,6, p. 98 et seq.) 	https://www.study-in-bavaria.de/
Berlín	<p>Announcement of the new version of the Berlin Higher Education Act (BerlHG); Since 26.07.2011 (GVBl. Berlin 67.2011,21, p. 378 et seq.),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ab. modified. by law of 02.02.2018 (GVBl. Berlin 74.2018,5, p. 160 et seq.) 	https://www.berlin.de/sen/wissenschaft/en/
Brandeburgo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandenburg Higher Education Act (BbgHG: Art. 1 of the Law on the New Regulation of the Higher Education Law of the State of Brandenburg); Vom 28.04.2014 (GVBl. I Brandenburg 25.2014,18, S. 1 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 05.06.2019 (GVBl. I Brandenburg 30.2019,20, p. 1 et seq.) 	https://www.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php/bb1.c.365239.de
Bremen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement of the new version of the Bremen Higher Education Act; Vom 09.05.2007 (GBl. Bremen 2007,31, S. 339 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 05.03.2019 (GBl. Bremen 2019,16, p. 71 et seq.) 	https://welcometobremen.de/en/angebot/angebotscat/university-level-institutions/
Hamburgo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamburg Higher Education Act (HmbHG: Art. 1 of the Law on the Reorganization of the Higher Education Act); Vom 18.07.2001 (GVBl. I Hamburg 2001,26, S. 171 	https://www.hamburg.com/residents/study/



Länder	Higher education Acts	Link for more information on higher education in each Länder
	ff.), zul. Modified by law of 27.11.2019 (GVBl. Hamburg I 2019,46, p. 409 f.)	
Hesse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hessian Higher Education Act and Act amending the TUD Act and other legal provisions; Vom 14.12.2009 (GVBl. I Hessen 2009,22, S. 666 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 18.12.2017 (GVBl. Hessen 2017,30, p. 482 et seq.) 	https://english.hessen.de/about-us/state-chancellery-ministries/hessian-ministry-higher-education-research-and-arts
Mecklemburg o-Pomerania Occidental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement of the new version of the State Law on Higher Education; Vom 25.01.2011 (GVBl. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2011,3, S. 18 et seq.), zul. Modified by law of 11.07.2016 (GVBl. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2016,15, p. 550 et seq.) 	https://www.government-mv.de/The-Ministries/Ministry-of-Education%2C-Science-and-Culture/
Baja Sajonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New announcement of the Lower Saxony Higher Education Act; Vom 26.02.2007 (GVBl. Niedersachsen 61.2007,5, S. 69 ff.), zul. Modified by law of 11.09.2019 (GVBl. Niedersachsen 73.2019,16, p. 261 f.) 	https://www.lower-saxony.de/education_and_science/
Renania del Norte-Westfalia	<p>Law on Higher Education Institutions of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Article 1 of the Law on the Future of Higher Education); Vom 16.09.2014 (GVBl. Nordrhein-Westfalen 68.2014,27, S. 547 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 12.07.2019 (GVBl. Nordrhein-Westfalen 73.2019,16, p. 425 et seq.; corrected 24.09.2019 in GVBl. Nordrhein-Westfalen 73.2019,21, p. 593).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Länders legislation on art and music schools: Gesetz über die Kunsthochschulen des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (Kunsthochschulgesetz – KunstHG: Art. 1 of the Gesetz zur Neuregelung des Kunsthochschulrechts); Vom 13.03.2008 (GVBl. Nordrhein-Westfalen 62.2008,10, S. 195 ss.), zul. Modified.by law of 17.10.2017 (GVBl. North Rhine-Westphalia 71.2017,31, p. 806 y ss.) 	https://www.studierendenwerke-nrw.de/en/
Renania-Palatinado	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement of the new version of the Higher Education Act (HochSchG); Vom 19.11.2010 (GVBl. Rheinland-Pfalz 2010,21, S. 463 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 18.06.2019 (GVBl. Rheinland-Pfalz 2019,9, p. 101 et seq.) 	https://mwg.rlp.de/de/weiterleitung-mbwwk/
Sarre	Saarland Higher Education Act (SHSG); of 30.11.2016 (OJ no. I Saarland 2016,47, p. 1080 et seq.), zul. modified. by law of 10.04.2019 (OJ No. I Saarland 2019, 21, p. 412 f.)	https://www.saarland.de/EN/topics/science-research/science-research_node.html



Länder	Higher education Acts	Link for more information on higher education in each Länder
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Länders legislation on schools of art and music: Gesetz über die Hochschule der Bildenden Künste – Saar (Kunsthochschulgesetz – KhG: Art. 1 des Gesetzes über die Hochschule der Bildenden Künste Saar und die Hochschule für Musik Saar); of 04.05.2010 (OJ No. I Saarland 2010,14, p. 1176 et seq., corrected in do I Saarland 2010,30, p. 1378). by Law of 20.09.2017 (OJ No. I Saarland 2017, 46, p. 974 et seq.) and Law No. 1338 on the Saar Music University (Musikhochschulgesetz – MhG: Article 2 of the Law on the Saarland University of Fine Arts and the Saar Music University); of 04.05.2010 (OJ No. I Saarland 2010,14, p. 1176 et seq.), geändert. by Law of 20.09.2017 (OJ No. I Saarland 2017, 46, p. 974 et seq.) 	
Sajonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement of the new version of the Saxony Law on Freedom of Higher Education; Vom 15.01.2013 (GVBl. Sachsen 2013,1, S. 3 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 05.04.2019 (GVBl. Sachsen 2019,6, p. 245 et seq.) 	https://www.sachsen.de/en/bildung-studium-forschung.html
Sajonia-Anhalt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement of the new version of the Higher Education Act of the State of Saxony-Anhalt (HSG S-A); Vom 14.12.2010 (GVBl. Sachsen-Anhalt 21.2010,28, S. 600 ff., corrected in GVBl. Sachsen-Anhalt 22.2011,10, p. 561), zul. modified. by law of 13.06.2018 (GVBl. Sachsen-Anhalt 29.2018,9, p. 72 et seq.) 	https://www.sachsen-anhalt.de/lang/english/politics/the-ministries-and-ministers/ministry-of-economy-science-and-digitalisation/
Schleswig-Holstein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New announcement of the current version of the Higher Education Act; Vom 05.02.2016 (GVBl. Schleswig-Holstein 2016,2, S. 39 ff.), zul. Modified by law of 21.02.2018 (GVBl. Schleswig-Holstein 2018,5, p. 58 et seq.) 	https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/EN/StateGovernment/III/iii_node.html
Turingia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thuringian Law to strengthen co-determination in universities and amend other higher education regulations (Thuringian Higher Education Law – ThürHG); Vom 10.05.2018 (GVBl. Thüringen 2018,5, S. 149 ff.), zul. modified. by law of 18.12.2018 (GVBl. Sachsen-Anhalt 2018,14, p. 731 et seq.) 	https://thueringen.de/

In the following link of the German Council of Rectors - HRK is available a database with most of the HEIs in the country: <https://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/higher-education-institutions.html>



For more information about the education system in the Federal Republic of Germany, please go to the following link:

<https://www.kmk.org/zab/central-office-for-foreign-education/education-system-in-germany.html>

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE

In Germany, there are three quality assurance mechanisms: one is state approval for private higher education institutions and two mechanisms for quality assurance or control of teaching and learning, which are program accreditation and (institutional) system accreditation.

Since institutional accreditation for private HEIs existed before, now called systemic accreditation, it allows the assurance or control of the quality of the university as a whole, ensuring the quality of programs (conferring the right to a self-sufficiency) with accreditation of the programmes themselves.

In Germany the term "high quality" is not used, nor are different years of accreditation felt as a result of the process, only different focuses of accreditation. In that sense, an institution is accredited or not.

For private HEIs, institutional accreditation is mandatory, and they can choose whether to also carry out accreditation of programs. It is not so for public ones, the latter can choose between the accreditation of the program or the system.

For more information on quality assurance agencies in Germany, higher education institutions and the status of accreditation, please consult the European Association for the Assurance of Quality in Higher Education (EHEA), in the following link: <https://www.eqar.eu/qa-results/search/by-institution/>. However, it may not be fully up to date. For this reason, it is important to supplement information with links to the Länders



(in the section of this guide referring to the most relevant laws and regulations) or access each IES or program in particular.

The official German database of programs and institutions accredited by the Accreditation Council at the moment is only in German, and can be found at the following link: <https://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/en/akkreditierte-studiengange-hochschulen/accredited-study-programmes-and-higher-education>

General information about institutions and programs in Germany can be found at the following link: <https://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/study-in-germany.html>

Supervision of higher education institutions is exercised by the relevant Länder Ministry of Science and Research. The treatment of public information on HEIs is autonomous in each Länder, so the links listed in point 2.2 of this guide are available. External evaluation is carried out by regional evaluation agencies at Länder level or by networks or associations of higher education institutions covering all Länder. The Science Council (Wissenschaftsrat) carries out institutional accreditation procedures for non-state universities (https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/DE/Home/home_node.html).

For the accreditation of undergraduate/bachelor's and master's programmes, the Permanent Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK) has established an Accreditation Council Foundation (Stiftung Akkreditierungsrat), for accreditation and quality assurance of learning and teaching in German higher education institutions. Through the Foundation, the Länder jointly carry out their tasks within the framework of quality assurance and quality development and, therefore, fulfil their national responsibility in the higher education sector to ensure the equivalence of the corresponding study and examination achievements, as well as of qualifications and the possibility of changing higher education institutions (<https://www.kmk.org/kmk/information-in-english.html>, <https://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/>).



3. ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR THE PROCESS OF RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES OBTAINED IN GERMANY

Recognition in Colombia of higher education degrees issued abroad is not mandatory, except in the following cases:

1. For regulated professions in which professional associations require recognition.
2. For people who wish to work in the public sector as contractors or public officials.
3. To participate in public tenders when specifications indicate it as necessary.
4. For teachers of public educational institutions, to be placed in the official scale.
5. The different validation criteria should be considered, depending on the program and the higher education institution that grants it.

To study in Germany and subsequently obtain recognition of the degree in Colombia, the following should be considered:

1. Studies must be carried out at a higher education institution recognized by the respective State or Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany.
2. Have the respective apostille in the documents.
3. It is recommended to do the apostille process, before returning to Colombia, with an authority of the Länder where the higher education institution is located. The Colombian Consulates in Berlin and Frankfurt can report on the apostille process in Germany.
4. In Germany, "the authority responsible for apostilles is the Federal Administrative Office (Bundesverwaltungsamt) with its main headquarters in Köln, when it comes to federal documents. In the case of documents from German territorial administrations, notarial courts or universities, those responsible are the regional authorities designated by the federal states (Länders), such as ministries and senates



of the interior, district governments, or presidents of district courts. In case of any doubt about the authority that grants apostilles, please contact the authority that issued the document" ("Degrees and Homologation | DAAD Colombia", 2021).

- For more information, please consult the page of the Academic Exchange Service (DAAD): <https://www.daad.co/es/estudiar-e-investigar-en-alemania/estudiar-en-alemania/titulaciones-y-homologacion/>, https://www.bva.bund.de/EN/Services/Citizens/ID-Documents-Law/Apostilles-authentication/apostille-authentication_node.html

If you have a degree issued by a higher education institution in Germany, and validation is required in Colombia, the following questions and answers can help understand the process:

1. When is it necessary to recognize a foreign higher education degree? The answer to this question can be found at the following link: <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidations/Convalidations-Education-Superior/350670:Know-the-process>
2. What is the difference between homologation and recognition? The answer to this question can be found at the following link: <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>
3. In case of doubt, who can help? The answer to this question can be found at the following link: <https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353:Preguntas-Frecuentes>



4. What are the steps for the recognition of higher education diplomas? The answer to this question can be found at the following link:
<https://www.gov.co/ficha-tramites-y-servicios/T366>

5. What are the costs of the process of validation of higher education diplomas? The answer to this question can be found at the following link:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/350995:Cost-and-duration>

In case of more questions regarding the process, the following link might help:
<https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/convalidaciones/Convalidaciones-Educacion-Superior/355353>: FAQ

Web pages consulted:

- <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isced>
- <https://anabin.kmk.org/anabin.html>
- https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bachelor-31_en
- https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/higher-education-funding-31_en#FinancialAutonomyControl
- https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/legislation-25_en#StateTreatyLaender
- https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/legislation-25_en#ConstitutionLawFederalLaw
- https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/third-cycle-phd-programmes-31_en
- https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en
- https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/germany_es



- https://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/DEU/DEU_2011_EN.pdf
- <https://stiftung-hochschullehre.de/>
- <https://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/>
- https://www.bva.bund.de/EN/Services/Citizens/ID-Documents-Law/Apostilles-authentication/apostille-authentication_node.html
- <https://www.daad.co/es/estudiar-e-investigar-en-alemania/estudiar-en-alemania/titulaciones-y-homologacion/>
- <https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/plan-your-studies/applying/>
- https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Institutions-Higher-Education/_node.html
- <https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/germany-europe/federal-states>
- <https://www.dzhw.eu/en/gmbh/orga>
- https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/
- <https://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/higher-education-institutions.html>
- <https://www.hochschulkompass.de/en/study-in-germany.html>
- <https://www.hrk.de/home/>
- https://www.hs-kompass.de/kompass/xml/index_en.htm
- https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Eurydice/Bildungswesen-engl-pdfs/dossier_en_ebook.pdf
- <https://www.kmk.org/kmk/information-in-english.html>
- <https://www.mygermanuniversity.com/>
- <https://www.mygermanuniversity.com/articles/study-medicine-in-germany>
- <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Germany-2020.pdf>
- <https://www.study-in-germany.de/en/>
- <https://www.studying-in-germany.org/german-education-system>
- https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/DE/Home/home_node.html