

# **Structural Conditions for Bachelor/Master Study Programmes**

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The (German) system of study programmes and academic degrees has been extended and differentiated by the possibility to establish Bachelor and Master programmes parallel to the existing programmes leading to *Diplom*, *Magister*, or State Examination. This requires the adaptation of the new programmes to the existing system. It will take some time to find out whether the new types of study programmes will be accepted by students and employers, whether they become established or not, and how far they will replace the traditional types of programmes or remain just occasional options in certain subject areas.

The international attraction of the German higher education institutions and the international recognition of German academic qualifications can only be improved by creating transparency and accountability of the quality guaranteed by the German final degrees. We cannot expect that other countries recognise the new degrees if we do not recognise them ourselves.

The new Federal Higher Education Framework Act (HRG) and the KMK's report on "Increasing the International Competitiveness of the German Higher Education System" of 24 October 1997 have effectively improved the conditions for the introduction of Bachelor/Master study programmes. The following regulations concretise these conditions. Beyond this concretisation the states and the institutions of higher education may make use of the given freedom..

## **1. Structure and duration of study programmes**

The HRG differentiates between the new Bachelor/Master study programmes according to § 19 and the traditional *Diplom* or *Magister* study programmes according to § 18. One and the same course may be an

element of study programmes of the one or the other type. The new structures means that the shorter Bachelor programmes must focus on one scientific core area with possible addition of other areas in order to generate interdisciplinary competence.

As the Bachelor/Master study programmes are specially meant to facilitate the ability of the German higher education institutions to co-operate on an international level, the regular duration of these programmes should be fixed, as internationally usual, in full year cycles (not semesters).

Beyond this the following condition are fixed:

- 1.1 Bachelor/Master study programmes may be offered by universities and university equivalent institutions as well as by *Fachhochschulen*, which does not affect the difference in terms of educational aims of these types of institutions.
- 1.2 The regular duration of Bachelor study programmes is according to the HRG § 19 section 2 to 5 three (minimum) to four (maximum) years, of Master study programmes one (minimum) to two (maximum) years. Consecutive Bachelor/Master study programmes must not exceed a regular duration of five years. In consequence students may reach the level of a Bachelor after three or four years, and the level of a Master after four or five years. The equivalence of comparable final qualifications must be achieved through appropriate measures of structuration and organisation of the study programmes. The *Fachhochschulen* must take provision that when they establish new study programmes of the short Bachelor or Master type these programmes remain application orientated. The introduction of Bachelor/Master study programmes must not undermine the efforts for the reduction of the real study duration and must not lead to an extension of the regular study duration of comparable traditional programmes leading to *Diplom* or *Magister*. Consecutive Bachelor/Master study programmes must be made attractive by applying the existing financial support scheme for students also for the Master phase.
- 1.3 The HRG differentiates between *Diplom* and *Magister* programmes in the traditional graduation system (§18) and Bachelor/Master study

programmes in the new system (§19). The degree of a Master according to the new system can only be a second professionally qualifying degree (§19 section 3 Sentence 1), which means only holders of a first professionally qualifying degree are eligible to the award a this Master. First degree programmes leading straight to a Masters degree are therefore prohibited.

- 1.4 The Bachelor is an independent professionally qualifying degree. An institution may offer Bachelor study programmes without offering a complementary Master programme.
- 1.5 An institution may offer Master study programmes for holders of first professionally qualifying degrees without offering a complementary Bachelor programme.

## **2. Conditions of Access and Transit**

The conditions of access to Master programmes are determined by the fact that a Master is an **additionally** professionally qualifying degree. Transit from one graduation system to the other must be possible.

- 2.1 Condition of access to a Master programme is in any case that applicants hold a first professionally qualifying degree. Additional admission requirements may be set up by the programme providers. The state governments may control these requirements.
- 2.2 Transit from traditional study programmes according to § 18 HRG and the new Bachelor/Master study programmes according to § 19 HRG is possible. Details are to be fixed in the respective regulations at state or institutional level.
- 2.3 Master degrees provide eligibility to doctorate, no matter whether the are of universities or *Fachhochschulen*.

## **3. Qualifications and designation of degrees**

The designation of a degree must relate to the orientation in terms of substance of the study programmes leading to it. On the other hand it must respect the need of achieving acceptance on the labour market and gaining

international appreciation by being unbiased and transparent. This requires that the number of different designations is kept as low as possible. The conclusion is

- 3.1 There is no differentiation of Bachelor/Master study programmes with respect to their prescribed regular study time (see chapter 1.2) which means that there are no different designations for Bachelor degrees achieved after three or four years of study and no different designations for Master degrees achieved after one or two years of study.
- 3.2 According to the KMK's resolution on "Increasing the International Competitiveness of the German Higher Education System" of 24 October 1997 there is a need to differentiate between degrees achieved through more theory orientated study programmes and degrees achieved through more application orientated study programmes, though the variety of designations should be kept as low as possible in order to secure transparency. In subject areas with a respective orientation it appears possible to offer more application orientated study programmes also at universities and schools of arts and more theory orientated study programmes also at *Fachhochschulen*.

The final degrees of **more theory orientated study programmes** are Bachelor/Master of Arts (Bakkalaureus/Magister Artium) and Bachelor/Master of Science (Bakkalaureus/Magister Scientiarum) without any additive referring to a subject area. No other designations of final degrees of more theory orientated study programmes are possible than those listed in the official statistics of subject area groups.

The final degrees of **more application orientated study programmes** are used in combination with additives referring to a subject area according to the respective subject area group. In case of certain specialised study programmes of the more application orientated type, further additives may be used as far they are internationally usual.

Subject area groups	Designation of final degrees
1. More theory orientated study programmes	
Linguistics and Cultural Science	B.A. (Bachelor of Arts/Bakkalaureus Artium)  M.A. (Master of Arts/Magister Artium)
Physical Education, Sports Science	
Law, Economics, Social Science	
Arts, Art Science	
Mathematics, Science	B.Sc. (Bachelor of Science/Bakkalaureus Scientiarum)  M.Sc. (Master of Science/Magister Scientiarum)
Medicine	
Veterinary Medicine	
Agricultural Science, Forestry Science, Food Science	
Engineering	
2. More application orientated study programmes	
Engineering	Bachelor/Master of Engineering
Economics	Bachelor/Master of Business Administration
Administration Science	Bachelor/Master of Public Administration
Social Work	Bachelor/Master of Social Work
Informatics	Bachelor/Master of Computer Science
Information and Communication Science	Bachelor/Master of Information and Communication Science
Design	Bachelor/Master of Design

As far as German designations are used for the new degrees there is the following rule:

The degrees derived from Latin of the more theory orientated study programmes must have no additive in the German language.

For the degrees derived from Latin of the more application orientated study programmes additives in the German language are recommended as follows:

- Engineering: Bakkalaureus/Magister der Ingenieurwissenschaften
- Economics: Bakkalaureus/Magister der Wirtschaftswissenschaften
- Administration Science: Bakkalaureus/Magister der Verwaltungswissenschaften
- Social Work: Bakkalaureus/Magister des Sozialwesens
- Informatics: Bakkalaureus/Magister der Informatik
- Information and Communication Science: Bakkalaureus/Magister der Informations- und Kommunikationswissenschaften
- Design: Bakkalaureus/Magister des Design

Information on the study programme leading to the respective degree should be provided in form of the so-called "diploma-supplement". The designation of the respective final degree must be in accordance with the substantial descriptions given in the "diploma-supplement".

3.3 Study programmes leading to Bachelor/Bakkalaureus or Master/Magister or *Diplom/Magister* are each independent courses of study, for which only one of the possible degrees can be awarded. This means that it is not possible to award a degree according to § 19 HRG (Bachelor/Bakkalaureus, Master/Magister) and at the same time to award a degree according to § 18 HRG (*Diplom/Magister*). It is only possible to certify equivalence.

3.4 The introduction of the new graduation system must not lead to a devaluation of the traditional German degrees *Diplom* and *Magister*. The rule is:

- The degrees *Diplom* and *Magister* awarded by a university or university equivalent institution are equivalent to the Master
- The *Diplom* of a *Fachhochschule* is on an international level equivalent to a Bachelor honours obtained after four years of studies

#### **4. Modularisation and Credit Points**

Institutes of higher education applying for governmental approval of a Bachelor and/or Master study programme must demonstrate that the programme is modularised and applies a credit point system.

Modularity and credit points permit calculable accumulation and facilitated transfer of credits. They also enable students to organise their studies in a more flexible way within the given amount of out a balanced use of the available teaching capacities.