

## Glossary of institutions in the German Education System

**Child care/day care**  
(*Kindertagesbetreuung*)

Day-care establishment for children younger than 3 years of age, for example, institutional day care as part of the child and youth welfare services (Kinder- und Jugendhilfe) in either the private or public sector (Kindertageseinrichtungen); also nonfamilial day care by childminders (Kindertagespflege) (KMK 2010a)

**Kindergarten**

Preschool establishment for children aged 3–6 years as part of the child and youth welfare services (Kinder- und Jugendhilfe) in either the public or private sector (not part of the school system) (KMK 2010a)

**Elementary school**  
(*Grundschule*)

Compulsory school for all children aged 6 years and above. It extends over four grades, except in Berlin and Brandenburg (six grades) (KMK 2010a)

**Special school (Förder-  
schule/Sonderschule/  
Schule für Behinderte/  
Förderzentrum)**

School providing education for those whose development cannot be promoted adequately at mainstream schools on account of disability (KMK 2010a)

**Secondary schools**  
(*Schulen im  
Sekundarbereich*)

After elementary school, the German educational system tracks students into different types of secondary schools. The system varies throughout Germany because each federal state (Land) decides its own educational policies. In general, German secondary education includes four main types of school: the Hauptschule, the Realschule, the Gymnasium, and the Gesamtschule (special schools provide both elementary and secondary education). Furthermore, several federal states (Länder) have new kinds of schools that combine the courses of education provided at Hauptschule and Realschule in curricular and organizational respects (KMK 2010b)

- Hauptschule: Type of school at lower secondary level providing a basic general education. Compulsory for all students not attending a different type of secondary school, usually comprising Grades 5–9 (KMK 2010a)
- Realschule: Type of school at lower secondary level, usually comprising Grades 5–10. Provides a more extensive general education and the opportunity to go on to courses of education at upper secondary level that lead to vocational or higher education entrance qualifications (e.g., Abitur) (KMK 2010a)

- **Gymnasium:** Type of school covering both lower and upper secondary level (Grades 5–13 or 5–12) and providing an in-depth general education aiming toward the general higher education entrance qualification (Abitur), which can, however, also be obtained at other types of school such as the Gesamtschule. Currently, most Länder are converting gradually from a 9-year to an 8-year Gymnasium course of education. Almost all Länder have already introduced the 8-year Gymnasium course. The upper Gymnasium level (gymnasiale Oberstufe) comprises Grades 11–13 or 10–12, depending on the Land and the type of school (KMK 2010a)
- **Gesamtschule:** Type of school at lower secondary level offering several courses of education leading to different qualifications. It takes the form of either a cooperative Gesamtschule or an integrated Gesamtschule. In the cooperative type, students are taught in classes grouped according to the different qualifications available, whereas in the integrated type, students are placed in courses grouped according to level of proficiency for a number of core subjects, but taught together as a year group for all other subjects. A Gesamtschule can also encompass the upper secondary level (KMK 2010a)

**Vocational gymnasium  
(Berufliches Gymnasium)**

Type of educational institution at upper secondary level offering a 3-year course of education in both the general education subjects taught at upper Gymnasium level (gymnasiale Oberstufe) and career-oriented subjects such as business and technology. It also leads to the general higher education entrance qualification (Abitur). Examples are vocational schools of economics or technical grammar schools (KMK 2010a)

**Apprenticeship (Lehre)**

Young people trained in Germany's dual system have an apprenticeship contract with a company in which they receive practical training. The contract basically stipulates the duration of training and the payment the apprentice receives. While the content of training apprentices receive at the workplace is highly regulated, the learning environment provided by companies may differ considerably

**Vocational education  
and training, VET  
(Berufsausbildung)**

In Germany, VET denotes the formal training young people receive below the university (tertiary) level. It typically focuses on a specific occupation and is completed with a certificate that often is recognized nationally due to the strong regulation of training content in many occupations. VET can take place either in the dual system or in specific educational institutions

**Dual system of vocational training (Duales Ausbildungssystem)**

System of VET in which young people take part in practical training in companies with parallel theoretical and specialist education in vocational schools. Practical training takes place typically on 3–4 days a week, with 1–2 days spent in school. Alternatively, education in schools may take place by way of block release

- Prevocational transition system (*Übergangssystem*)** A system of training courses that are supposed to provide young people who have not yet entered VET with skills that may enhance their “trainability.” Courses typically last 9–12 months and do not lead to recognized vocational certificates; some courses offer the possibility for young people to acquire general educational certificates that they were unable to obtain in secondary school. In some cases, the training received may be recognized later on by firms as fulfilling some of the requirements of formal training
- Vocational academy (*Berufsakademie*)** Tertiary education institution in some federal states (Länder), offering courses of academic training combined with practical in-company professional training following the principle of the dual system (KMK 2010a)
- Universities and equivalent higher education institutions (*Universitäten und vergleichbare Hochschulen*)** Universities (Universitäten) and equivalent institutions of higher education include the traditional universities as well as universities of technology (Technische Hochschulen) that specialize in natural and engineering sciences, colleges of education (Pädagogische Hochschulen, College of education), which still exist only in Baden-Wuerttemberg, and theological colleges (Theologische Hochschulen) (KMK 2003)
- Colleges of art and music (*Kunst- und Musikhochschulen*)** Colleges of art and music are higher education institutions offering teaching and research in fine art, design, music, drama, media, film, and television. Admission conditions often differ from those at universities because student admission is often granted on the basis of proven talent or aptitude tests (DAAD/HIS 2010)
- College of education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*)** Type of higher education institution in Baden-Wuerttemberg, equivalent in status to the universities, offering courses of study for teaching careers at elementary level and certain teaching careers at lower secondary level. In specific cases, the colleges of education also offer study courses for educational and pedagogic professions outside the school sector (KMK 2010a)
- Universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*)** Type of higher education institution established in the 1970s with the particular function of providing application-oriented teaching and research, particularly in engineering, business, administration, social services, computer sciences, and design (KMK 2010a)
- Providers offering training or courses of adult learning (*Anbieter für Weiterbildung*)** In Germany, training or courses of adult learning are offered by various providers, for example, firms (the most important group), state-founded institutions such as Volkshochschule (adult education centers), state agencies such as the Federal Employment Agency, chambers of commerce and crafts, and a wide range of nongovernmental organizations

## References

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