Credit Transfer for Open/Online Graduate Programs: Annex 7 Germany

By Dr Paul Bacsich, Matic Media Ltd

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3.7   Germany

Germany is a federal country with a population of nearly 83 million. It is comprised of 16 states (Länder) with populations varying from 671,000 (Bremen Land) to nearly 18 million (North Rhine-Westphalia). Higher education policy is fully the responsibility of the Länder. In this sense Germany is similar to Canada.

Types of institution

Higher education (HE) studies in Germany are offered at three types of Higher Education Institutions (HEI):

- Universitäten (Universities) including various specialized institutions such as Technical Universities, offer the whole range of academic disciplines. In the German tradition, universities focus in particular on basic research so that advanced stages of study have mainly theoretical orientation and research-oriented components.
- Fachhochschulen (Universities of Applied Sciences) concentrate their study programmes in engineering and other technical disciplines, business-related studies, social work, and design areas. The common mission of applied research and development implies a distinct application-oriented focus and professional character of studies, which include integrated and supervised work assignments in industry, enterprises or other relevant institutions.
- Kunst- und Musikhochschulen (Universities of Art/Music) offer studies for artistic careers in fine arts, performing arts and music; in such fields as directing, production, writing in theatre, film, and other media; and in a variety of design areas, architecture, media and communication.

While most HEIs are public institutions, there are around 80 private HEIs and 40 church-run HEIs. On the whole, these are not well regarded and educate only a few percent of all students.

The FernUniversität in Hagen is the only state-maintained distance teaching university in Germany. It is a member of EADTU.

Fees

Germany enabled Länder to introduce tuition fees in 2007. However, those Länder that introduced fees have been abandoning this practice in recent years, and now there are no tuition fees anywhere in Germany for national/EU students for any level of programme. There are some caveats e.g. for master's not a direct follow-on to a bachelor's.[1]

There are also no fees for international students. However, this is set to change.[2]

Small administrative fees may be charged in Germany (the situation differs between Länder).

Some Master's programmes charge fees. Private universities do charge fees.[3]

Online learning

On the whole, Germany is not advanced in online learning. A number of studies have been done to determine how to foster flexible learning, but until recently there were only a few large-scale interventions, such as the Bavarian Virtual University (VHB).[4]

In Germany the German Open University (FernUniversität in Hagen) is the main public provider of HE distance learning, but over a very limited range of vocational subjects. The German government is aware that there is inadequate provision of DOL: a study on this topic, OPULL,[5] was completed a few years ago. StudyPortals records 211 DL programmes offered at higher education level.

The federal structure is seen as an inhibitor to innovation, with four states having fewer people than Northern Ireland (and in particular, Bremen well under a million).

There is a national MOOC provider **iversity**, with 12 German members. There are also two German members of Coursera.

However, as was the case with Pisa reforms in schools, the German federal government can, with care, large sums of money and arm-twisting, achieve nationwide programmes by spending federal money to match or enhance state-based interventions. This is currently in progress with three strands:

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[1] http://www.mastersportal.eu/articles/358/university-tuition-fees-and-living-costs-in-germany-low-cost-german-degrees.html

[2] See for example https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/university-news/tuition-fees-reintroduced-some-german-universities

[3] http://www.mastersportal.eu/articles/358/university-tuition-fees-and-living-costs-in-germany-low-cost-german-degrees.html

[4] https://www.vhb.org/en/homepage/

[5] http://www.leuphana.de/en/institutes/ipm/research/opull.html

- A large programme to fund ICT-based delivery of vocational HE
- A large programme to fund ICT-based delivery of academic HE
- A set of working groups of the German Rectors Association on e-learning matters.

Vocational

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is spending 15 million euro to fund innovative approaches to future-oriented vocational training. Responsible for the implementation of the 3-year funding programme, the Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB), has approved 34 projects in 62 institutions. Represented are universities, extramural research institutions, educational institutions, industry associations, chambers of commerce, chambers of crafts, social partner organizations and companies.

The funded projects are active in the following areas:

- Labour markets and skill development
- Professional development and professionalization
- Continuing Education Research.

Academic – "open universities"

With the competition[6] "Advancement through Education: Open Universities" the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is currently funding in the first nationwide contest 26 projects and in the second round of the competition 47 projects from universities and university networks, to develop study programmes for working adults and other target groups. The study programmes will contribute in particular:

- to secure the supply of skilled workers permanently;
- to improve the permeability between vocational and academic education;
- to ensure a more rapid transfer of knowledge into practice;
- and to support the profile of the universities in the field of lifelong learning.

The funded projects are based on a variety of formats, including part-time courses, sandwich courses, study modules and certificate offers.

Scientific support and evaluation of the this competition is headed by the FernUniversität in Hagen, plus the University of Oldenburg, the Technical University of Dortmund and the Centre for Higher Education Development.

3.7.1 FernUniversität

The FernUniversität in Hagen is the only state-maintained distance teaching university in Germany and indeed in all the German-speaking countries and regions. This has its HQ at the main campus at Hagen and also runs around 30 study centres in Germany, Austria and Central and Eastern Europe. About 76,000 students have chosen to study with FernU. It is a member of EADTU.

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[6] See for example https://vdivde-it.de/en/conference-joint-federal-government-lander-advancement-through-education-open-universities

Master's (all in German)

Title	*ECTS*
Computer Science (M.Sc.)	120
Practical Computer Science (M.Sc.)	90
Education and Media – eEducation	(not known)
The Modern Age in Europe: History and Literature	(not known)
Philosophy in the European Context	(not known)
Psychology	(not known)
Governance	(not known)
Mathematics	(not known)
Law (Master of Laws)	(not known)
Business Administration and Economics	120
Economics	120
Business informatics	120

MSc in Business Informatics

This is well summarised:[7]

> The study program can be studied in four-semester full-time studies or a six-semester part-time study. Whether you need less or more time is dependent on your previous knowledge and especially your individual learning time. The estimated workload is 3,600 hours (120 ECTS points). It is divided into eight compulsory modules and the final module.

> The final module consists of a seminar or practical course and the master's thesis and is completed in its entirety either from the Faculty of Economics or at the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science.

> The compulsory elective modules have a workload of 6 hours per week and a workload of 300 hours. They are each weighted with 10 ECTS points. [That makes 80 ECTS for all eight modules.]

> The scope of the termination module is 24 SWS (workload 1,200 hours). It is weighted with 40 ECTS points.

Entry requirements

These seem to give little scope for PLAR:[8]

> For the enrollment, you need an officially certified copy of a **completed degree** with a minimum of six semesters at a university within the scope of the basic law or an equivalent foreign degree in the field of study:

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[7] http://www.fernuni-hagen.de/wirtschaftswissenschaft/studium/studiengaenge/master_winf/index.shtml

[8] http://www.fernuni-hagen.de/wirtschaftswissenschaft/studium/studiengaenge/master_winf/voraussetzungen.shtml

- Business Informatics (Bachelor, Diploma, Magister)
- Computer Science (Bachelor, Diploma, Magister)
- Economics / economics, business economics, economics (Bachelor's, Diplom, Magister), provided that at least 30 ECTS credits are given in the course of these courses on business informatics or computer science (e.g. process modelling, software engineering, programming languages, databases) Content (mathematics, statistics).

Graduates from other fields of study, in which contents of economics, business informatics or computer science have been taught, can be enrolled if the above contents are at least 90 ECTS points. The content of the business informatics or computer science (e.g. process modelling, software engineering, programming languages, databases) must have a minimum of 30 ECTS points and the mathematical content (mathematics, statistics) of at least 10 ECTS points.

Note: If the contents of economics, business informatics or computer science are present to an extent of 90 ECTS points and only the contents of the business informatics or computer science and / or mathematical contents are missing, the missing knowledge before the admission of the master study course can be through [selected] modules in the academic studies...

3.7.2 Wismar University

An alternative perspective comes from Wismar University of Applied Sciences.

The Distance Learning Portal reports that there are 94 distance learning master's programmes in Germany, of which around half are in English.[9] Many of these are from private universities, but since these do not have a good reputation in Germany and serve only a small percentage of students, we have focussed on online offerings from established public universities, including universities of applied sciences.

Wikipedia reports that:[10]

The Hochschule Wismar, University of Applied Sciences: Technology, Business and Design (or short: University of Wismar), is the **third-biggest and third-oldest public university in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern**, Germany.... The university was founded in 1908 as an engineering academy and has become an important part in the city's cultural life.

Since 2007 the university has been restructured and has now 3 **faculties reflecting the three** subjects in its name: technology, business and design:

- Faculty of Engineering (Mechanical, Process and Environmental Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electronics and Multimedia Engineering, Maritime Studies)
- Faculty of Business (Business Administration, Business Law, Business Informatics) also called Wismar Business School

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[9] http://www.distancelearningportal.com/search/#q=ci-11|lv-master|mh-blended,online&start=0&length=10&order=relevance&direction=desc

[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hochschule_Wismar

- Faculty of Design (Design, Architecture, Interior Architecture, Communication Design)

The university offers more than 50 courses, **including distance learning courses**. Some courses in Maritime Studies are offered in cooperation with the European Cruise Academy. Most courses lead to a bachelor's degree after 3-3.5 years or a master's degree after another 1.5-2 years. Students with a master's degree (5 years of study) qualify for pursuing a PhD.

MSc Green Architecture

The programme web site states:

> The aim of our part time master programme 'Master Green Architecture' is to provide the complexity and the technical knowledge necessary for 'ecological building' designing. The inter-university degree programme provides knowledge about ecosystems, sustainable technical cycles, urban and building ecology, in particular energy saving and building construction, planning and design aspects. This will teach you how to apply scientific methods to convey and develop your own ideas independently. Our professors and lecturers are themselves practicing architects, scientists and researchers from a variety of universities and research institutes who bring with them innovation and academic experience to accompany your projects.

> The programme is a blend of online and on-campus components. The compulsory seminars will be held over one week each semester, for a total of two weeks per year. Students that are attending will need to travel to the following locations: Wismar, Berlin, Herne and Freiburg.

Entry requirements

> The Master Green Architecture distance learning programme is a further education programme. To be admitted into our programme you need to meet the following requirements:

> - academic degree (Bachelor's, Master's, Diploma) in a related field of study obtained from a national or international university
> - at least one year of professional work experience within the related field after completing your academic degree

> There is an exception; if the first academic degree is not related to the field of study, the approval to study can only be given with proof of at least three year's professional work experience. Please contact us to discuss in detail the admission requirements related to your personal situation.

So there appears be no prospect of PLAR. There are no hits on the web site for relevant key words or phrases.