Foreign Qualifications: Proof and Procedures for Employers

Proof of a foreign qualification helps you as an employer to better assess the skilled worker and their qualification. In many cases, it is also a requirement for the skilled worker to receive a visa. Here, you can find out which documents are required and how the procedure works.

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When do international skilled workers need to provide proof of their qualifications?

Whether an international **skilled worker** can work in Germany depends, among other things, on whether and how they need to prove their foreign qualification. It is therefore important for employers to know the requirements early on. This way, you can factor in the necessary procedures, documents and processing times when planning your workforce.

Recognition of the qualification is not always required. In particular, check the following aspects:

- Does the skilled worker need a **visa** or a **residence title** for the job?
- Is the intended profession regulated in Germany?
- Does the skilled worker have a foreign **academic degree** or a vocational qualification?
- Which entry or residence route is applicable?

Checking the skilled worker's nationality and route of entry

For employers, the skilled worker's nationality is an important factor. It helps determine whether a visa or residence title is required for employment in Germany and which proof of qualification must be submitted.

Skilled workers from EU and EEA countries and Switzerland

Skilled workers from the member states of the European Union (EU), as well as from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (**EEA** states) and Switzerland, generally do not need to provide proof of their qualification to work in Germany.

An exception applies to **regulated professions**. In these professions, professional authorisation is required before the activity may be carried out.

Skilled workers from third countries

Skilled workers from non-EU/EEA countries (third countries) usually need proof of qualification to obtain a visa or **residence permit** for **qualified employment** in Germany.

Special rules for nationals of the Western Balkan states

Special rules apply to nationals of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia who wish to take up employment in Germany. You can find more information in the **information sheet on the Western Balkans Regulation**.

Regulated and non-regulated professions: what applies?

For employers, the distinction between regulated and non-regulated professions is particularly important, as it affects which documents are required to employ an international skilled worker.

Regulated professions: check authorisation before starting employment

Regulated professions may only be practised in Germany if certain legal requirements are met. This usually includes providing proof of the required qualification and holding professional authorisation or recognition. A **protected professional title**, such as engineer, is also a form of regulation.

Regulated professions include, for example, doctors, nursing professionals and certain master craftsperson trades. The Federal Employment Agency provides an **overview of regulated professions**

Non-regulated professions: check requirements on a case-by-case basis

Non-regulated professions make up the majority of professions in Germany. In these cases, formal recognition of the qualification is not always required.

However, it is still important for employers to know that, even in non-regulated professions, skilled workers from third countries may need to provide proof of qualification when applying for a visa or residence title for qualified employment.

Which documents are required in each individual case depends mainly on the type of qualification and the specific entry or residence route. If it is an academic degree, proof can be provided by a **positive result in the anabin information portal**. For vocational qualifications, a **recognition procedure** is usually required. This depends on the type of visa.

How skilled workers can prove their qualifications

Depending on the case, different procedures and documents may apply. It is worthwhile for employers to clarify these questions early on, so that procedures, documents and processing times can be planned realistically.

The recognition procedure for vocational qualifications and regulated academic professions

A **recognition procedure** checks whether a foreign qualification is equivalent to a German reference profession.
In particular, the procedure is applied in the following cases:

- for regulated professions (regardless of whether this involves vocational training or a degree programme)
- and for non-regulated professions with a vocational qualification (generally at least two years of training)

The **Recognition Finder** on the "Anerkennung in Deutschland" (Recognition in Germany) portal makes it easy to identify the relevant recognition authority in just a few steps.

The recognition procedure can lead to the following outcomes:

- **Full equivalence:** The qualification is fully equivalent and is recognised in Germany. With full equivalence, you can apply for a visa for qualified employment. The following types of visa are possible:
  - **EU Blue Card** (academic qualifications only)
  - **Work visa for qualififed professionals** (academic and vocational qualifications)
- **Partial equivalence / recognition "with conditions":** This result is issued when parts of the training are equivalent and others are not. The substantial differences compared with the German reference profession can be offset through qualification measures. For regulated professions, the competent authority determines the measure, which can be an adaptation period or an aptitude test. If your future employee receives a **recognition notice** "with conditions", this means that their foreign qualification is recognised in principle but still shows gaps compared with the German profession. During the compensation measures, the future employee may – under certain conditions and, where applicable, with restrictions – work for you, for example under a temporary **licence to practise** (e.g. for doctors) or in employment below the full qualification level.
  Employment during the **qualification measure** in Germany is possible with the following visa types:
  - Visa for the **recognition partnership**
  - **Visa for the recognition of foreign non-academic vocational qualifications** with the aim of achieving full equivalence in Germany.

- **No equivalence:** The qualification is not considered recognised in Germany and does not constitute sufficient proof of employment as a skilled worker.
  The recognition procedure usually takes up to three months from receipt of all documents. A fee is payable for the procedure. Further information on the procedure, costs and requirements can be found on the "**Anerkennung in Deutschland**" portal.
- **Skills analysis for missing documents:** If proof of a foreign vocational qualification is missing or incomplete, a **skills analysis** may be considered in certain cases. This allows practical verification of a person's ability to perform the occupation. The competent recognition authority decides whether a skills analysis is possible. You can find more information on the process and costs of the skills analysis on the "**Anerkennung in Deutschland**" portal.

Proof of academic qualifications for non-regulated professions

If a skilled worker holds an academic degree and wishes to work in a non-regulated profession (e.g. IT or business), proof of the assessment of the degree may be required, depending on the case.
There are two main options for this:

- **Positive results in the anabin information portal:**
  Using the **anabin information portal**, you can check whether the **university** is recognised and whether the degree is classified as comparable. This proof is free of charge.
- **Individual Statement of Comparability:**
  If there is no entry in anabin, or if no clear result can be obtained, your skilled worker can apply for a **statement of comparability** from the ZAB. The statement of comparability is subject to a fee. Detailed information on the process and fees is available on the **ZAB website**.

For employers, it is important to know that these documents help assess whether an academic qualification can be recognised for certain residence-related purposes. The following types of visa are possible here:

- **EU Blue Card**
- Work visa for qualified professionals (academic qualifications)
- Visa for professionally experienced workers

The DAB procedure: proof of state recognition in the country of training

For certain residence titles, it may be relevant that the qualification is recognised by the state in the country of training. However, this proof **does not automatically replace the assessment of whether a qualification is comparable or equivalent to a German qualification.**

Depending on the qualification, different types of proof may apply:

- **Statement on a Foreign Vocational Qualification (DAB)** for certain non-academic vocational qualifications: The DAB is issued by the ZAB on application by the future skilled worker and is subject to a fee. You can find more information on the **ZAB website**.
- **anabin information portal** or a **Statement of Comparability** for academic degrees: These documents can be used both for state recognition in the country of training and, depending on the case, for assessing comparability with a German qualification.

State recognition in the country of training is particularly relevant for certain residence titles, for example:

- the **recognition partnership**
- the **visa for professionally experienced workers**

Qualification measures in Germany

If substantial differences are identified during the recognition procedure, a qualification measure in Germany may be required to achieve full recognition. This is particularly relevant for employers when the skilled worker already has a specific job offer and the **post-qualification** is to be prepared or supported alongside subsequent employment.

Depending on the case, different residence routes are possible, such as the following:

- **Visa for participation in qualification measures**: This visa is issued for up to 24 months and can be extended by a further 12 months if required, allowing a stay of up to three years in total. During the post-qualification, the skilled worker can work without time restrictions in a job matching their intended professional profile. A qualification measure can be, for example, in-company work as part of an adaptation period or a language course.
- **Visa for the recognition partnership:** This visa requires a specific job offer, as well as a contractual agreement in which you, as the employer, commit to supporting the required qualification measure during employment. The residence title is initially issued for up to one year and can be extended if required.

How can I provide help as an employer?

Employers can help prepare recognition and entry procedures more effectively and avoid delays in taking up employment.

You can support your future employees, for example, by

- pointing out the necessary documents and evidence at an early stage,
- helping clarify the appropriate procedure,
- passing on contacts for competent authorities or advisory services,
- factoring in processing times when planning your workforce,
- and, where appropriate, covering the costs of procedures or qualification measures.
  Specialised advisory services for companies, for example in the field of professional recognition, also offer helpful support. Country and occupation profiles can also be used to classify foreign qualifications.

Information on the web

Recognition of qualifications in Germany

Recognition Finder

The Central Office for Foreign Education (ZAB)

Recognition of foreign diplomas

European Commission

Database of regulated professions

Unternehmen Berufsanerkennung

Information about the recognition of professional qualifications

Network IQ

Explore the IQ services in your area

ProRecognition

Contact and advice centres at ten Foreign Chambers of Commerce

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