Vocational Training or Academic Studies in Germany?

What is the difference between vocational training in Germany and academic studies? Are you unsure of what path to choose between the two? Here you will find an overview of what differentiates them.

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Vocational training or academic studies: what is the better fit for me?

Dual vocational training combines theory and practice. Due to you spending a lot of time in the company, you will gain a lot of practical work experience. During **in-school vocational training**, your education will mostly be based on theory (relating to a specific profession) complemented by practical units.

Academic studies are more science- and research-oriented: it prepares you for a deeper understanding of subject-related topics. There are differences between the different types of universities (of applied sciences), as well as the individual courses of study.

Here you will find the most important differences between vocational training and a study programme. This information will help you choose the educational path that best suits your career goals:

Where do vocational training or academic studies take place?

- Dual vocational training: company + **vocational school**
- In-school vocational training: vocational school
- Academic studies: **university** (of applied sciences)

How long do vocational training or academic studies take?

- Vocational training generally takes a shorter time to complete: 2 to 3,5 years.
- Academic studies take about 3 to 5 years to complete, depending on whether undergraduate bachelor studies are followed by a master's degree.

What are the differences in terms of financing?

During dual vocational training, you earn money from the onset. In-school vocational training is generally funded by the state (except for private schools) and you have minimal to no costs. Academic studies at public universities are mostly free of charge (exception: administrative costs known as **semester fees** [Semesterbeitrag]).

What career prospects lie ahead of you?

Academic studies open doors to academic, specialized and often higher positions, international occupations, research or a **doctorate**/PhD programme.

If you wish to work in a profession promptly, vocational training is a very good option. Even with vocational training, your career can advance, for example via **further training qualifications** (e. g. "Meisterin / Meister", Bachelor Professional and Master Professional). Under certain conditions, you can also enter an academic course of study with completed vocational training.

Is vocational training worth as much as academic studies?

The system of **(dual) vocational training** may be new to you, and you may ask yourself what kind of reputation vocational training has. Both paths have their own worth and advantages. The career prospects can be great for both paths! It always depends on which field or profession you choose, and which type of qualification is in demand.

Vocational training has a high reputation in Germany – maybe higher than in other countries. This becomes evident when looking at the following aspects:

- **Tradition of vocational training:** In Germany, vocational training has a long tradition. In medieval times, there were already alliances of bakers or shoemakers, for example. They ensured that all manual labour of the crafts and trades is of quality and organized the vocational training of apprentices.
- **State involvement:** The state is a central player in the vocational training system. Vocational schools are funded by public funds, just like most universities. In addition, the state particularly regulates who is responsible for what tasks during the vocational training. This shows that vocational training is of high pertinence in the German system.
- **International reputation:** The quality of the German vocational training is known on an international level. Especially the dual vocational training system enjoys a great reputation all over the world. Even if you may wish to work in a different country, German vocational training is recognised globally and shows that you have a lot of knowledge and skills.
- **Demand for qualified skilled workers:** Did you know that a lot of companies, especially in Germany, are looking for professionally qualified staff? The businesses are looking for skilled workers with practical skills or special knowledge that are typically acquired during vocational training. Therefore, the persons who have these topic-specific skills are highly valued.

So, if you complete vocational training in Germany, you can be certain that you are well prepared for your future. You can find more information under "**Prospects after the training.**"

Summary: Five reasons for vocational training and academic studies

5 good reasons for vocational training:

- Quick labour market integration
- High quality of vocational training
- Worldwide recognition
- Income during the vocational training
- Opportunities for further development

5 good reasons for academic studies in Germany:

- High-value education
- Low study fees
- Large range of courses of study
- Good career opportunities, including research and leading positions
- International atmosphere

Video: Switching from studying to vocational training

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