One way of training for your future occupation in Germany is by pursuing a dual vocational training programme. Such programmes offer plenty of opportunities for on-the-job training and work experience. Programmes usually last between two and three and a half years and consist of theoretical as well as practical elements. You will spend one or two days a week, or several weeks at once, at vocational school (Berufsschule) where you will acquire the theoretical knowledge needed in your future occupation. The rest of the time will be spent at a company, where you will get to apply your newly acquired knowledge in practice, for example by learning to operate machinery. You will get to know what your company does, learn how it operates and find out if you can see yourself working there after training.

The combination of theory and practice gives you a head start for your job: by the time you have completed your training, you will not only have the required technical knowledge, but you will also have hands-on job experience. There are around 325 officially recognised training programmes in Germany, so there is a good chance that one of them might suit your interests and talents. You can find out which one that might be by visiting a vocational training fair in many German cities at different times during the year. Information on when and where the fairs take place can be found on the Planet Beruf website (available in German).

Employment prospects for students who have completed a dual vocational training programme are excellent. This is one of the reasons why this kind of training is very popular amongst young Germans: around two thirds of all students leaving school go on to start vocational training. Here you can find further information on the requirements for starting vocational training in Germany.

Vocational training and pay

In Germany, students pursuing a vocational training programme receive a monthly salary from the company they work for. On average a trainee has a gross income of around €987.00. Depending on the occupation an salary may be higher or lower. For example, mechatronics engineering trainees have an average gross income of €1,100.00 per month. The salary you receive as a trainee increases with each year of training. Part of your salary will be deducted for social security contributions. If you earn more than €9,984.00 per year, your income will be subject to income tax. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung – BIBB) has published a report on occupations and the respective salaries you receive as a trainee.

Stages of dual vocational training

Dual training programmes usually start on the 1st of August or the 1st of September each year. The job training at a company and classes at a vocational school (Berufsschule). Classes may include German, English and Social Studies. Around two thirds of the classes specifically focus on subjects that are important for your future occupation. During your training programme, you are entitled to at least 24 business days or four weeks of annual leave. However, you may only take your leave during school holidays. Your teachers, instructors and colleagues will give you all the support you need during your programme. You will take an examination to assess what you have learned at the end of your training programme. If you pass your final exams, you have a good chance of starting a successful career in Germany.

Information on the web

Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi)

The dual vocational training system in Germany.