

**Recognition of Qualifications /  
Recognition of Course and Examination Achievements  
(Skills)**

**As of: 17/05/2017**

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## A. Legal framework

### a) Lisbon Recognition Convention

The legal framework for the recognition of qualifications (degrees) as well as course and examination achievements (achievements) is provided by implementation of the "Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region" (referred to as **Lisbon Recognition Convention**).<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this convention is to improve the recognition of qualifications as well as course and examination achievements in order to increase the mobility and flexibility of students, for example in the context of a national or international change in higher education institution or type of higher education institution or in the context of studying abroad.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention was drawn up in 1997 under the auspices of the European Council and UNESCO, ratified in Germany in 2007 and implemented by resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) of 15/10/2009.

### b) Bavarian Higher Education Act (BayHSchG)

The country-specific implementation of the KMK resolution of 2009 applicable to Bavaria was made in Art. 63 BayHSchG – "Recognition of skills"<sup>2</sup>.

*Art. 63  
Recognition of skills*

*(1) <sup>1</sup>Study periods, course and examination achievements that have been acquired in study programmes offered at other state or state-approved higher education institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany, by successfully completing a distance learning unit in the context of a study programme offered at a state or state-approved higher education institution in the Federal Republic of Germany or in study programmes offered at higher education institutions abroad will be recognised when continuing the course of studies, taking exams, starting another course of study or being admitted to a doctoral programme, unless there are significant differences regarding the acquired skills (learning outcomes). <sup>2</sup>The same applies to course and examination achievements that have been acquired at a state or state-approved higher education institution in Bavaria in the context of other studies pursuant to Art. 56 (6) nos. 1 and 2, in special study programmes pursuant to Art. 47 (3) sentence 1 or at the Virtual University of Bavaria.*

*(2) <sup>1</sup>Skills that have been acquired in the context of other further education studies pursuant to Art. 56 (6) no. 3 or outside higher education institutions can be recognised if they are equivalent. <sup>2</sup>Skills acquired outside higher education institutions may replace no more than half of the skills to be demonstrated.*

*(3) .....*

The Bavarian Higher Education Act uses the term "**recognition**" almost exclusively in connection with the equal treatment of non-state and state institutions of higher education. With regard to skills, it speaks of "**crediting**". However, the term "**recognition**" is used throughout the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The criterion for the recognition of achievements is the acquired skills (learning outcomes), which must not differ significantly from the respective achievements re-

<sup>1</sup> Federal Law Gazette 2007 Part II No. 15, p. 712-732

<sup>2</sup> [www.gesetze-bayern.de/content/document/BayHSchG-63](http://www.gesetze-bayern.de/content/document/BayHSchG-63)

quired. The Bavarian Higher Education Act does not make a distinction between achievements acquired in Germany and those acquired in other (European) countries, but assumes that the Lisbon Recognition Convention applies without restrictions in any place.

### **c) RaPO and APO of DIT**

The General Examination Regulations for Universities of Applied Sciences in Bavaria (RaPO) and the General Examination Regulations (APO) of DIT govern in particular the procedure and the responsibilities for the recognition of skills at DIT within the framework given by Art. 63 BayHSchG.

Extract from Sec. 4 of the General Examination Regulations of Deggendorf Institute of Technology in the version of 15/03/2015 and 15/06/2015<sup>3</sup>

.....

(3)

*"Skills, in particular knowledge and expertise acquired outside higher education institutions, in particular in the context of relevant successfully completed vocational training or school education, other further education studies or a practical vocational activity, can be recognised for the achievements to be acquired in the study programme if they are equivalent. <sup>2</sup>Students who have completed relevant vocational training and a largely continuous practical vocational activity of at least 12 months can make an application for these periods to be recognised for the internship semester in whole or in part, if the content and objective of the vocational training and the practical vocational activity are equivalent to the educational objectives and training contents of the internship semester. <sup>3</sup>Such skills acquired outside higher education institutions may replace no more than half of the skills to be acquired in the study programme."*

(4)

*<sup>1</sup>The recognition pursuant to Subsections 1 to 3 requires an application and is only possible if the study period or examination to be waived on account of the recognition has not yet been completed and the examination has not yet been taken. <sup>2</sup>The application must be submitted to the Centre for Studies by the end of the lecture period of the semester in which the enrolment or change in study programme takes place. <sup>3</sup>The documents required for recognition must be submitted by the applicant along with the application. <sup>4</sup>The examination board in charge of the decision specifies the type and scope of the required documents and announces these specifications in good time in line with the standard practice at the higher education institution.*

## **B. Recognition of skills**

The following explanations are limited to the recognition of achievements. For questions regarding the recognition of qualifications (degrees), the individual points of contact in the relevant faculties are responsible.

### **a) Requirements for recognition**

#### **aa) Achievements – Skills**

The subject of the recognition are the achievements acquired by the students. The outcome of the learning and achievement process, the skills acquired by the students (learning outcomes), whose significant dissimilarity is a decisive assessment

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.th-deg.de/de/studierende/studenten-und-pruefungsverwaltung/hochschulrecht/satzungen-und-verordnungen>

criterion, must be taken into account.

Skills (learning outcomes) provide information on the abilities the students have acquired after completion of a module or an entire study programme or during vocational training, for example.

**bb) Course and examination achievements acquired at higher education institutions – (academic achievements)**

For the recognition of achievements, it is not relevant whether the students have acquired the achievements at their own or a different university, at a university of applied sciences, in the vocational education and training system or in Germany or abroad.

These **academic achievements** must be recognised if there are **no significant differences** regarding the acquired skills (learning outcomes).

If there are **no significant differences**, achievements **must** be recognised from

- study programmes offered at state or state-approved higher education institutions in Germany or abroad,
- distance learning units offered at state or state-approved higher education institutions in Germany,
- other study programmes offered at a state or state-approved higher education institution in Bavaria (Art. 56 (6) nos. 1 to 3 BayHSchG),
- special study programmes pursuant to Art. 47 (3) s. 1 BayHSchG and
- special study programmes offered at the Virtual University of Bavaria.

**cc) Skills acquired outside higher education institutions (non-academic skills)**

Skills acquired in the context of other further education studies or outside higher education institutions (non-academic skills) can be recognised if they are **equivalent**.

**Skills acquired outside higher education institutions**, i.e. in particular in the context of

- relevant, successfully completed vocational training
- relevant, successfully completed school education
- practical vocational activity

}	no more than 50% of the skills to be replaced (= total ECTS points earned in the study programme)
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may not replace more than half of the skills to be demonstrated.

**b) Assessment of skills (learning outcomes)**

The above-mentioned legal framework assumes that achievements acquired at higher education institutions must be recognised, unless there are significant differences regarding the acquired skills (learning outcomes) or the skills acquired outside higher education institutions are not equivalent in terms of content and level.

**aa) Responsibility**

According to the General Examination Regulations for Universities of Applied Sciences in Bavaria and the APO of DIT, the decision on the recognition of achievements is

made by the examination board, taking into account the statement of the relevant module coordinator.

## **bb) Application**

The recognition of course and examination achievements always requires submission of an application by the students; ex officio recognition is not possible.

As a rule, students submit the application for recognition of achievements using a standard application form that is uniform across higher education institutions. The application must be submitted to the Centre for Studies by the end of the lecture period of the semester in which the enrolment or change in study programme takes place. The documents required for the recognition must be submitted by the applicant along with the application. The examination board in charge of the decision specifies the type and scope of the required documents and announces these specifications in good time in line with the standard practice of the higher education institution.

Within the scope of their obligation to cooperate, students are obliged to submit along with the application all documentary evidence required to assess the significant differences between the skills as well as the equivalence of skills. The documents must show the acquired skills, the scope of the module, the institution where the skills have been acquired and the like<sup>4</sup>.

## **cc) Assessment of skills (learning outcomes)**

Before making a statement, the module coordinator assesses the acquired skills based on the documents submitted by the students. If it turns out while assessing the skills that the documents submitted are not sufficient to assess the eligibility for recognition, the student has to submit further documents. If the student is unable to do so, recognition is not possible.

If the skills have been acquired at the higher education institution where the student is enrolled, the module descriptions from the module guide must be taken as a basis.

In the ideal case, the skills acquired outside higher education institutions can also be assessed based on the module descriptions. If this is not the case, alternative sources must be used. These may include personal information meetings with the applicant to clarify the learning outcomes, review of examination tasks and materials, (online) research on the study programmes offered at the external institution and getting in touch with the competent specialist representative of the external institution. However, the higher education institution is not obliged to conduct its own research; the evidence must be submitted by the student.

Oral or written examinations for the assessment of learning outcomes (students have already acquired the achievement) and requesting extensive summaries/synopses of scripts as well as teaching, learning or examination materials are **not permitted**.

## **dd) Assessment of significant differences/equivalence**

A criterion for the recognition of achievements already acquired at a higher education institution is the absence of **significant differences** between the skills (learning

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<sup>4</sup> Handout of Recognition Round-Table published by the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) – "Criteria for good recognition and good recognition practices, June 2016, p. 6

outcomes).

This means that achievements are recognised if the skills already acquired do not differ significantly from those which would have been acquired at DIT. As demonstrated by the term "significant difference", the Lisbon Recognition Convention assumes a difference between the skills, but the difference must not be significant. Whether the difference is significant is assessed according to the following criteria:

**Primary criteria:**

- **Level of learning outcomes** (detailed evaluation and comparative assessment)

Information about the level of learning outcomes is provided by taxonomies on the basis of cognition levels. DIT recommends using the taxonomy that is already used in the module descriptions of its study programmes.

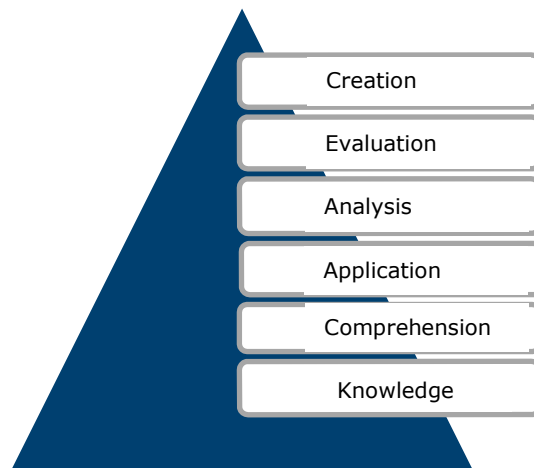


Fig.: Taxonomy for classification of learning objectives by Bloom (1956) as well as Anderson and Kratwohl (2001)

The intellectual demand on the cognitive performance increases at each level, with "knowledge" being associated with the lowest and "creation" with the highest demand. Higher cognitive performances include those at lower levels, i.e. presuppose them.

- **Learning outcomes** (highly divergent learning outcomes, no teaching content)
- **Programme profile** (overall qualification objective)

**Secondary criteria:**

- **Workload** (ECTS points)
- **Formal quality** (grading system, quality assurance / accreditation of the programme, ranking of the institution and the overall qualification)

However, decisive questions in the context of the assessment of significant differences are: **Do the achievements already acquired enable the student to continue his or her studies and can the overall qualification objective of the study programme still be achieved?** A significant difference can only be assumed

if successful completion of the study programme is compromised. The assessment is always made in the overall context of the programme or qualification profile. This is particularly decisive when it comes to the recognition of compulsory modules. When recognising modules for those with a very broad range of electives, a completely different achievement can also be recognised.

If the achievements have been acquired outside higher education institutions, the question of **equivalence** of skills is a crucial criterion for the recognition of achievements. Equivalence does not mean similarity in terms of complete identity. The learning outcomes must be equivalent **in terms of both content and level**:

- **Equivalence** of learning outcomes **in terms of content** does not require full consistency of the learning contents or subjects. This means that the subject used to teach the skills need not be identical (example: It does not matter whether the skill of being familiar with the structure of a classical literary work is taught based on a work by Goethe or Schiller).
- **Equivalence in terms of level** is given if the abilities (= learning outcomes) acquired in the course of the learning process in a module are identical (cf. taxonomy above).

The recognition of achievements requires equivalence in terms of both content and level. No more than 50% of the achievements acquired outside higher education institutions may be recognised for the achievements to be acquired in the study programme (total ECTS points).

It must be ensured that statements once made regarding the absence of significant differences or equivalence are transferable to other cases, i.e. identical applications for recognition (compliance with the principle of equality). It may be advisable to create a corresponding (regularly updated) list or database.

### **ee) Recognition of ECTS points, grading, semester classification**

Once the absence of significant differences and the equivalence of learning outcomes have been established, the achievements are recognised as follows:

- **ECTS points**  
As a rule, the students receive the number of ECTS points that are awarded for achievements at DIT. For achievements acquired outside higher education institutions, the upper limit for recognition is 50% of the total number of ECTS points to be earned in a study programme. According to the principle of significant difference, the number of ECTS points need not be identical either.

Suggested solutions for selected scenarios<sup>5</sup>

#### Scenario 1:

The module to be recognised and the skills acquired in it are not included in the study programme in question.

Solution:

Recognition is not possible. The module can only be included in the transcript of rec-

<sup>5</sup> BeckOK Hochschulrecht Bayern/Aulehner BayHSchG Art. 63 marginal no. 73 ff

ords as additional information. Not mandatory.

#### Scenario 2:

Although similar skills have been acquired in the module to be recognised, the examination form differs from that of the study programme in question.

Solution:

The module is recognised. A different examination form has no influence on the acquisition of skills.

#### Scenario 3:

The assessment systems of the module to be recognised and that of the module in question differ.

Solution:

The module is recognised.

If the module to be recognised has been graded and the module of the study programme is assessed as "passed/failed", the module will be included with the assessment "passed".

If the module to be recognised has been assessed as passed, but not graded, and the module of the study programme is graded, either a subsequent grading can be made or the module will only be included with the assessment "passed" without a grade.

If the grading system of the module to be recognised and that of the study programme differ significantly, a grade conversion must be made.

#### Scenario 4:

The competent recognition body is informed that the student has already completed a module that is eligible for recognition, but the student does not apply for recognition.

Solution:

Compulsory or ex officio recognition is not possible. The module is not recognised.

#### Scenario 5:

The module to be recognised comprises fewer ECTS points than the module of the study programme in question.

Solution:

If there is a minor difference in ECTS points, the module will be recognised with the number of ECTS points awarded for the module of the study programme.

If there is a significant difference in ECTS points, the module will be recognised if the success of further studies is not compromised.

Recognising part of the achievement and then taking an exam to compensate for the missing part of the achievement is also possible.

#### Scenario 6:

The module to be recognised comprises more ECTS points than the module of the study programme in question.



Solution:

The module is recognised with the number of ECTS points awarded for the module of the study programme in question.

#### Scenario 7:

Several modules to be recognised correspond in total to several modules of the study programme in question, but the layout of the individual modules to be recognised and that of the individual modules of the study programme in question differ.

Solution:

The modules can be recognised as a whole.

#### Scenario 8:

A module already completed and integrated in the bachelor's degree programme is to be again integrated in a master's degree programme building on the bachelor's degree programme.

Solution:

The module is recognised even if the Study and Examination Regulations exclude such multiple integrations of the same module. Something different can only apply if, according to the module descriptions, the skills to be acquired in the bachelor's and master's study programme differ, even though it is the same module. This may be the case if additional skills are intended to be taught in the module of the master's degree programme.

- **Grading**

The grade for the recognised achievement is adopted from the institution where the achievement has been acquired.

If the grading system of the higher education or other institution where the achievement has been acquired does not correspond to that of DIT, the grades are usually converted according to the so-called Bavarian formula.

Prof. Götze has specifically developed a programme for the conversion of grades of higher education institutions abroad, which will be used for the first time across higher education institutions from SS 2017. It is based on the application of the modified Bavarian formula as well as information obtained from the ANABIN database of the KMK's Central Office for Foreign Education.<sup>6</sup>

If no grade has been awarded at the institution, the student will not receive a grade either and the transcript of records will show the remark "recognised achievement" and the assessment "passed".

- **Semester classification**

As a rule, recognition of about 20-25 ECTS points leads to classification into the next higher semester. The competent recognition bodies may also approve classification into the next higher semester below the above-mentioned ECTS credit limit if successful completion of the study programme is not compromised.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://anabin.kmk.org/anabin.html>

Students must be informed about the recognition of achievements. As a rule, this is done in the form of a notification by the Centre for Studies.

#### **ff) Burden of proof and students' obligation to cooperate**

According to Art. 63 BayHSchG, the **burden of proof** that an application for recognition does not meet the necessary requirements (i.e. that the learning outcomes differ significantly or are not equivalent) lies with the **higher education institution**.

Nevertheless, students are obliged to cooperate in the assessment of learning outcomes. The students' obligation to cooperate includes the following options:

- Personal information meetings with the students to clarify the learning outcomes (no exam!),
- Provision of teaching and learning materials (e.g. scripts, notes, homework, minutes, etc.),
- Provision of examination tasks or materials (e.g. seminar papers, lab reports, presentations, etc.),
- Online research on the study programmes offered at the external institution,
- Getting in touch with the external institution.

Due to the reversal of the burden of proof, the student must not be disadvantaged if he or she is unable to present the documents in full for reasons beyond his or her control.

#### **gg) Rejection of applications for recognition**

An application for recognition can only be rejected if THD is able to prove that there are significant differences in the learning outcomes of the acquired achievements.

The chairperson of the examination board must **provide a written rationale** (if necessary, with reference to the statement of the module coordinator) and information on the right of appeal. The rationale must be formulated in such a way that the grounds for rejecting the application are understandable and conclusive even to outside laypersons. It is recommended that the rejection of the application be formulated according to the following criteria:<sup>7</sup>

- Description of skills in terms of learning outcome and level, taking into account the qualification and programme profile at DIT
- Comparison with the acquired skills in terms of learning outcome and level,
- Pointing out to what extent there are significant differences.

**No sufficient grounds for rejection** are differences exclusively in the number of ECTS points, the institution (e.g. university of applied sciences) or the place (country, state). These circumstances may only **suggest the possible presence of a significant difference**, which, however, must be **justified** in more detail. The application for recognition can also not be rejected on grounds that the skills acquired by the student have already been recognised at another institution or for another module; the **principle that skills are not "consumed"** applies. Skills that have already played a role in the context of the admission to the higher education institution must

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<sup>7</sup> See footnote 4

also be taken into account.

For this reason, the time that has elapsed since the acquisition of the skills is also irrelevant. This aspect may only lead to rejection on grounds of significant differences "if it can be demonstrated that the acquired knowledge and expertise are so seriously outdated compared to the current standard that the skills acquired at that time appear to be completely useless in view of today's requirements".

### **C. Recognition of achievements acquired abroad (learning agreement)**

If students are planning to study at a higher education institution abroad, they can conclude a so-called learning agreement in advance to facilitate later recognition of the achievements acquired abroad.

The learning agreement is an agreement between the students as well as their home and host university. As an instrument of the *European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)*, the learning agreement is designed to facilitate the transfer of ECTS points and increase the students' mobility.

A detailed process description is already available at V:\General\Processes\Process descriptions\Achievements acquired abroad KS07\_01.

### **D. Points of contact**

If you have any legal questions regarding recognition of course and examination achievements (skills), please contact:

Stefanie Kamm, Department of Studies  
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[Stefanie.Kamm@th-deg.de](mailto:Stefanie.Kamm@th-deg.de)

If you have any questions regarding conversion of grades, please contact:

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If you have any questions regarding admission to higher education institutions abroad and learning agreements, please contact:

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