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The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States Decides to Introduce B.A. and M.A. Degree Programs (June 12, 2003)

In response to the Bologna Declaration, which aimed to harmonize educational structures throughout Europe, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States [*Kultusministerkonferenz*] decided to introduce B.A. and M.A. degree programs.

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**The Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States in the Federal Republic of Germany**

*Ten Theses on the Structure of B.A. and M.A. Programs in Germany*

The introduction of a tiered system with B.A. and M.A. degree programs is a central aim of German higher education policy. It is part of a far-reaching organizational and substantive reform of university studies, a reform that will lead to greater differentiation in the educational programs offered at institutions of higher education. Tiered degree programs open up a range of study options that can be used flexibly by entering students, current students, and the presently employed, in accordance with their individual need for professional and vocational qualifications. In this way, tiered degree programs lead to shorter periods of study, distinctly higher success rates, and to the ongoing improvement of students' vocational and professional qualifications and to graduates' employability. The new system guarantees international compatibility, and thus increases both student mobility and the international appeal of German institutions of higher education. [ . . . ]

**1. The Independence of B.A. and M.A. Degree Programs**

B.A. and M.A. degrees are independent university degrees that confer professional qualifications. The integration of a B.A. degree into the [traditional] diploma [*Diplom*] course of study is not permissible, nor is the awarding of an M.A. degree on the basis of the successful completion of the diploma course of study.

## **2. Tiered Structure of Study**

As the first academic degree that confers professional qualifications, the B.A. is the standard degree and thus leads most students into the world of employment. Admission to an M.A. program, the second tier of study, is contingent upon the completion of either an initial qualifying university degree or an equivalent degree; admission should also depend on additional requirements.

## **3. Professional Qualifications**

As the standard university degree, the B.A. reflects the attainment of an independent professional skill set developed on the basis of the curriculum taught within the regular duration of a course of study. Bachelor's degree programs must impart the scholarly foundations, methodological competencies, and professional and vocational qualifications necessary for entry into professional and vocational life.

## **4. Profile Types**

M.A. degree programs are to be divided into "more practical" or "more research-oriented" programs. In accordance with the varying focal points of institutions of higher education, they can be offered at universities as well as polytechnics (technical and applied science colleges).

[ . . . ]

## **6. Regular Duration of a Course of Study and Workload**

The regular duration of a course of study leading to a B.A. is at least three but not more than four years; for an M.A., is it from one year to a maximum of two years. The regular duration for consecutive courses of study is a maximum of five years. [ . . . ]

## **8. Qualifications**

Fundamentally speaking, B.A. degrees confer the same qualifications as diploma degrees [*Diplom*] from polytechnics; consecutive master's degrees confer the same qualifications as diploma degrees and *Magister Artium* degrees from universities and other equivalent institutions of higher education. [ . . . ]

## **9. Quality Assurance and Accreditation**

B.A. and M.A. degree programs must be accredited. Adherence to the common structural guidelines for the federal states for B.A. and M.A. degree programs, in accordance with Article 9, Section 2, of the Higher Education Act (HRG), as adopted by the Standing Conference of the

Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States of the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK), shall be reviewed in the accreditation process.

## **10. European Higher Education Area**

A tiered system with B.A. and M.A. degree programs is an essential component of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which is to be created by 2010, in correspondence with the objectives of the Bologna Declaration. Nonetheless, compelling reasons can support the retention of the established degrees beyond 2010.

Source: Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States, “Zehn Thesen zur Bachelor- und Masterstruktur in Deutschland” [“Ten Theses on the Structure of B.A. and M.A. Programs in Germany”], June 12, 2003, [www.kmk.org/doc/beschl/BMThesen.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/doc/beschl/BMThesen.pdf)

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