

Information about the use of foreign academic degrees, titles and designations in the State of Bremen
(as of 2025)

The use of academic titles is legally protected in Germany. Hence, also the use of titles and degrees received abroad is regulated by law. All 16 federal states have passed regulations on this, normally within the scope of state laws on higher education.

These regulations are based on the corresponding decisions made by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) which are available [here](#).

The ministries of science in the respective state of residence of the degree holder provide information about prevailing legal norms.

A foreign academic title may be used in Germany given that it has been properly awarded by a higher education institution or a public authority entitled to do so. Additionally, the university must be state-recognised or accredited in the country of origin.

Degrees must have been awarded based on a completed study programme, except honorary degrees. These regulations apply to state and church degrees as well as academic titles and ranks.

If use of an academic title is granted under a state's regulation, it is valid in all other German federal states as well. The misuse of academic titles is punishable under Section 132a of the German Criminal Code (StGB) and may result in imprisonment of up to one year or a fine.

In the State of Bremen, foreign academic degrees, academic job titles, and university titles may be used in their permissible form without prior approval. The permissible form of use is governed by Section 64b of the Bremen Higher Education Act (BremHG) of May 9, 2007 (Brem.GBl. 2007, p. 339), as most recently amended by Section 114 of the Act of April 1, 2025 (Brem.GBl. p. 382).

This only regulates the authority and form of use of the foreign degree, designation, or title, but not the question of whether, for example, a particular foreign degree corresponds to a comparable German degree in terms of content and value.

No individual approval is required and submission of an application is not needed. Official permits to use foreign academic titles and degrees are not provided by law, and are therefore not issued.

The only exception applies to persons who are eligible under the Federal Displaced Persons Act (BVFG). In these cases, it is possible to apply for a (fee-based) conversion of a foreign degree into an equivalent German degree, provided that the academic requirements are met.

The Senator for the Environment, Climate and Science does not make any additional individual decisions in other cases.

Foreign Degrees, Titles and Designations

Foreign university degrees, academic job titles, and university titles — including comparable state or church titles — may be used in Bremen if they were awarded by a recognized institution in the country of origin that is legally authorized to grant degrees, and if the degree was earned through a properly completed university program with a final examination (§ 64b BremHG).

If these conditions are met, the academic degree may be used in its original form in the national language, including the name of the awarding institution. The title may be transliterated into Latin script, the abbreviation commonly used or officially approved in the country of origin may be used, and a literal translation may be added in parentheses.

Conversion of foreign degrees into a German degree or the use of German designations is not allowed.

Degrees, designations, and titles from countries with which Germany has concluded agreements on the recognition of higher education equivalencies may be used according to the terms of those agreements. This also applies mutatis mutandis to other agreements on the use of degrees, designations, and titles. Degrees, designations, and titles from member states of the European Union and the European Economic Area, as well as from the European University Institute in Florence, may be used in their original form without any indication of origin.

Further information on foreign higher education qualifications, institutions, and degrees obtained abroad can be found in the "[anabin](#)" database, the information portal on foreign educational qualifications of the Central Office for Foreign Education

Doctorates

The principles outlined above apply to the use of foreign doctorates.

As noted, there are exceptions for the following cases:

- Doctorates from member states of the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA), and
- Academic degrees from the European University Institute in Florence and Pontifical Universities.

These degrees may be used in their original form without indicating the country of origin.

Holders of doctoral degrees obtained in a scientific doctoral program at the above-mentioned countries or institutions may, instead of the abbreviation approved in the country of origin or proven to be in common use, optionally use the abbreviation “Dr.” without any subject-specific addition and without any indication of origin.

This exception does not apply to doctorates awarded without a full doctoral program and examination process (so-called professional doctorates) or to doctorates that, according to the legal regulations of the country of origin, do not correspond to the third cycle of the Bologna framework. This includes, among others, the so-called “minor doctorates” from Slovakia, such as “PhDr.”, “Pharm. Dr.”, and “Paed.Dr.”.

The simultaneous use of both abbreviations is not permitted.

The doctoral degrees from Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America listed in the resolution of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of September 21, 2001, in the version dated May 28, 2021, may use the abbreviation “Dr.” without any subject-specific addition or designation of origin.

Doctorates from Russia listed in the corresponding resolution may be used with the abbreviation “Dr.”, but with the addition of the awarding university.

However, for doctoral degrees from the United States of America, this only applies if the awarding institution is classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a „ Research University ([high research activity](#))“ or as a „Research University ([very high research activity](#))“.

Honorary Degrees

Foreign honorary degrees may be used if they were awarded by authorities legally authorized to do so in the country of origin. A prerequisite is that the foreign university has the right to confer the corresponding degree. For example, if an honorary doctorate is awarded, the university must have the right to award doctorates.

Honorary degrees may only be used in the form in which they were originally awarded, and must include a reference to the awarding institution, in accordance with the legal provisions applicable in the country of award.

University Titles and Academic Job Titles

University degrees and academic job titles may only be used if they were awarded in accordance with the regulations of the country of origin. They must be used in the form in which they were originally awarded, and the awarding institution must be stated.

An academic job title (e.g., Professor) may only be used for the duration of the position.