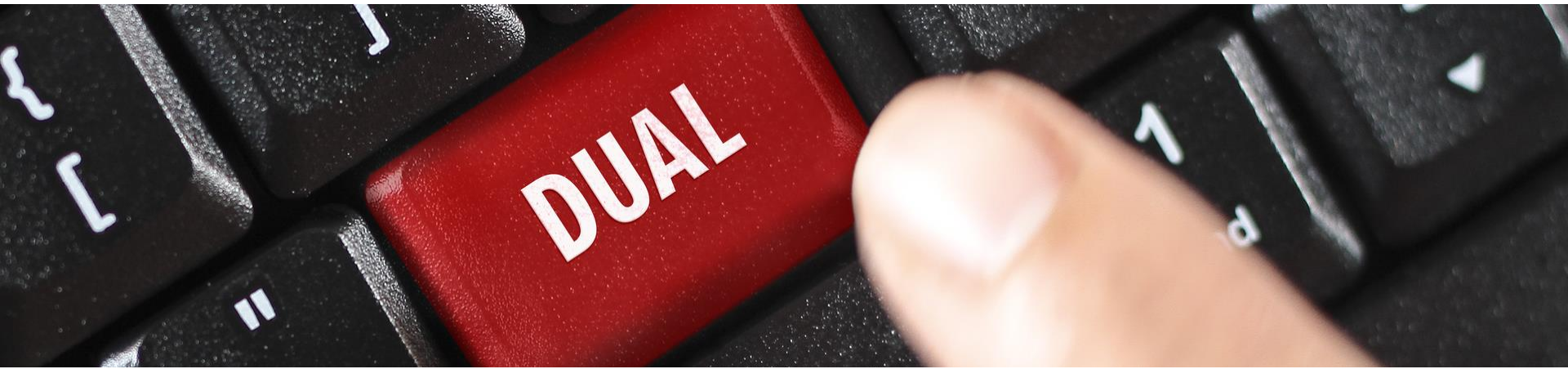


Dual Higher Education in Germany – Developments and Quality Assurance

Keynote „EU4Dual Annual Conference 2026“

Dr. Sigrun Nickel | Heilbronn | 23.04.2026



- I. Current developments in the German Dual Higher Education area
- II. Challenges relating to the Quality Assurance of Dual Study Programmes
- III. Conclusion

- I. **Current developments in the German Dual Higher Education area**
- II. **Challenges relating to the Quality Assurance of Dual Study Programmes**
- III. **Conclusion**

Types of Dual Study Programmes in Germany

Dual Studies with integrated apprenticeship

Combines a higher education degree with a vocational degree. Both have to be systematically integrated with close institutionalized interlocking between Higher Education Institution (HEI), participating companies, chambers for the different professional fields and sometimes vocational schools. Parts of the vocational training are credited towards the higher education degree. Usually Bachelor degrees.

Dual Studies with integrated practice

Study programme, that integrates systematically long periods of practical training. Key condition is a close and binding cooperation between HEI and companies. Other institutions like chambers or vocational schools must not be part of the cooperation. Parts of the practice phases are credited towards the higher education degree. Usually Bachelor degrees.

Dual Studies on-the-job

Full- or part-time study programme that integrates a (part-time) job at a company. Both parts have to be closely related. HEI and companies work closely together regarding the curriculum and creditability of the working phases. Usually Master degrees.

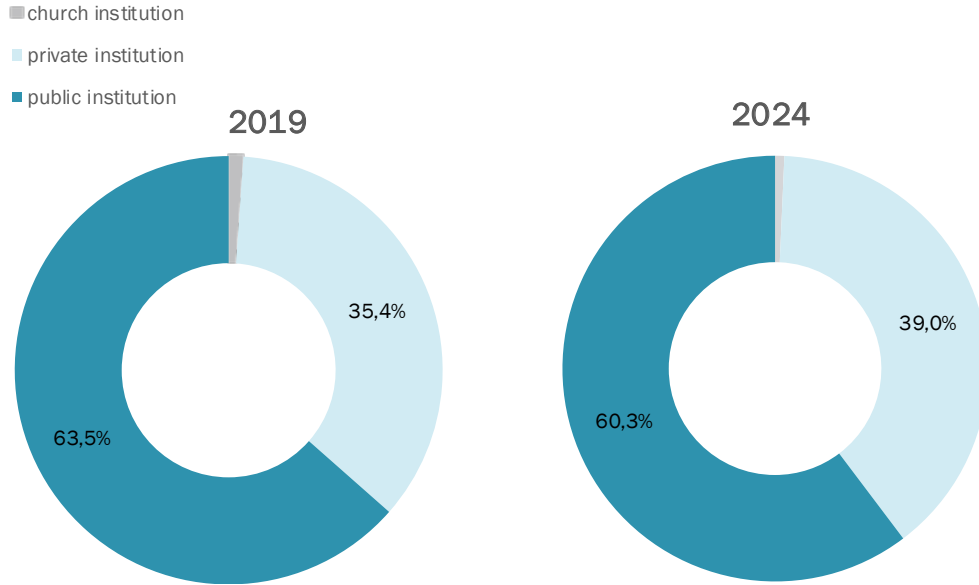
Practice-integrated type is most common

Types of dual study programmes	2019	2022	2024
Vocational Training-integrated dual study programmes	27,1 %	21,4 %	17,0 %
Practice-integrated dual study programmes	68,2 %	75,2 %	80,0 %
Job-integrated dual study programmes	4,7 %	3,5 %	3,0 %

Source: CHE Centre for Higher Education, data from Federal Statistics Office of Germany

- Dual studies are still a marginal phenomenon in the German education system. In 2024 only 4,8 percent of all students were enrolled in a dual study programme. Compared to 2019 there is a small increase of 0,6 percent from about 122.000 to 144.000 dual students.
- The number of cooperating companies is limited and the quantity is fluctuating depending on the economic situation. In April 2026 we had in Germany about 8000 companies, which were involved in dual study programmes (BIBB 2026).

Almost one third of all dual students at private HEI



- Most dual students are enrolled in public HEI
- Slight increase of student share (2,6 %) in private HEI between 2019 and 2024
- Main providers of dual study programmes are public Universities of Applied Sciences (70 %; BIBB 2025)
- The share of Dual HEI is about 16% and of full universities only 4%.

Source: CHE Centre for Higher Education based on data from DESTATIS Federal Statistics Office of Germany

Income predominantly between 600 and 1200 €

Study field	Monthly net income from dual studies					
	no income	< EUR 300	EUR 300 to 600	EUR 600 to 900	EUR 900 to 1.200	> EUR 1.200
Civil Engineering (n = 74)	0 %	0 %	5.4 %	47.3 %	44.6 %	2.7 %
Electrical Engineering (n = 121)	0 %	0 %	1.7 %	45.5 %	48.8 %	4.1 %
Social Sciences (n = 457)	0.2 %	0 %	0 %	2.0 %	23.4 %	74.4 %
Nursing Sciences (n = 230)	10.4 %	0.9 %	3.0 %	30.9 %	44.3 %	10.4 %
Computer Science (n = 791)	0.9 %	0.1 %	2.8 %	41.7 %	45.5 %	9.0 %
Mechanical Engineering (n = 183)	0 %	0 %	3.8 %	46.4 %	43.7 %	6.0 %
Mechatronics, Systems Engineering (n = 104)	0 %	0 %	1.0 %	46.2 %	43.3 %	9.6 %
Other Engineering Sciences (n = 61)	0 %	0 %	1.6 %	47.5 %	49.2 %	1.6 %
Industrial Engineering (n = 275)	0,4 %	0 %	2.2 %	53.5 %	39.3 %	4.7 %
Economics (n = 1.165)	0.3 %	0.1 %	3.5 %	44.7 %	41.5 %	9.9 %

Source: Online survey among dual students, CHE Centre for Higher Education 2020/21; pro rata; n = shown in the table for each area of studies; question asked: "Please let us know how much money you have at your disposal every month from various sources: net income from dual studies, e. g., apprenticeship pay."

- I. Current developments in the German Dual Higher Education area
- II. **Challenges relating to the Quality Assurance of Dual Study Programmes**
- III. Conclusion

High degree of dual student satisfaction

Area of studies	All in all, are you satisfied with your current course of studies?			
	Yes	Rather satisfied	Rather not satisfied	No
Civil engineering (n = 79)	63.3 %	26.6 %	7.6 %	2.5 %
Electrical engineering (n = 123)	46.3 %	43.1 %	5.7 %	4.9 %
Social sciences (n = 467)	36.4 %	52.2 %	8.6 %	2.8 %
Health and nursing sciences (n = 239)	36.8 %	50.6 %	8.4 %	4.2 %
Information technology (n = 803)	42.8 %	44.0 %	8.6 %	4.6 %
Mechanical engineering (n = 187)	49.2 %	41.7 %	5.9 %	3.2 %
Mechatronics, systems engineering (n = 105)	41.0 %	40.0 %	11.4 %	7.6 %
Other fields of engineering (n = 63)	52.4 %	33.3 %	4.8 %	9.5 %
Industrial engineering (n = 282)	53.2 %	36.9 %	6.7 %	3.2 %
Business sciences (n = 1,176)	42.2 %	47.0 %	8.1 %	2.7 %



Very low drop out rates: under 10 % in most dual study programmes (Nickel et al. 2022). General average in German Bachelor programmes 30 % (Trennt et al. 2024).

Source: online survey among dual students, CHE Centre for Higher Education 2020/21; pro rata; n = shown in the table; question asked: “All in all, are you satisfied with your current course of studies?”

Are dual studies a success story in Germany?



Yes. Attractive option for prospective students and employers with high demand and student satisfaction as well as low drop out rates.



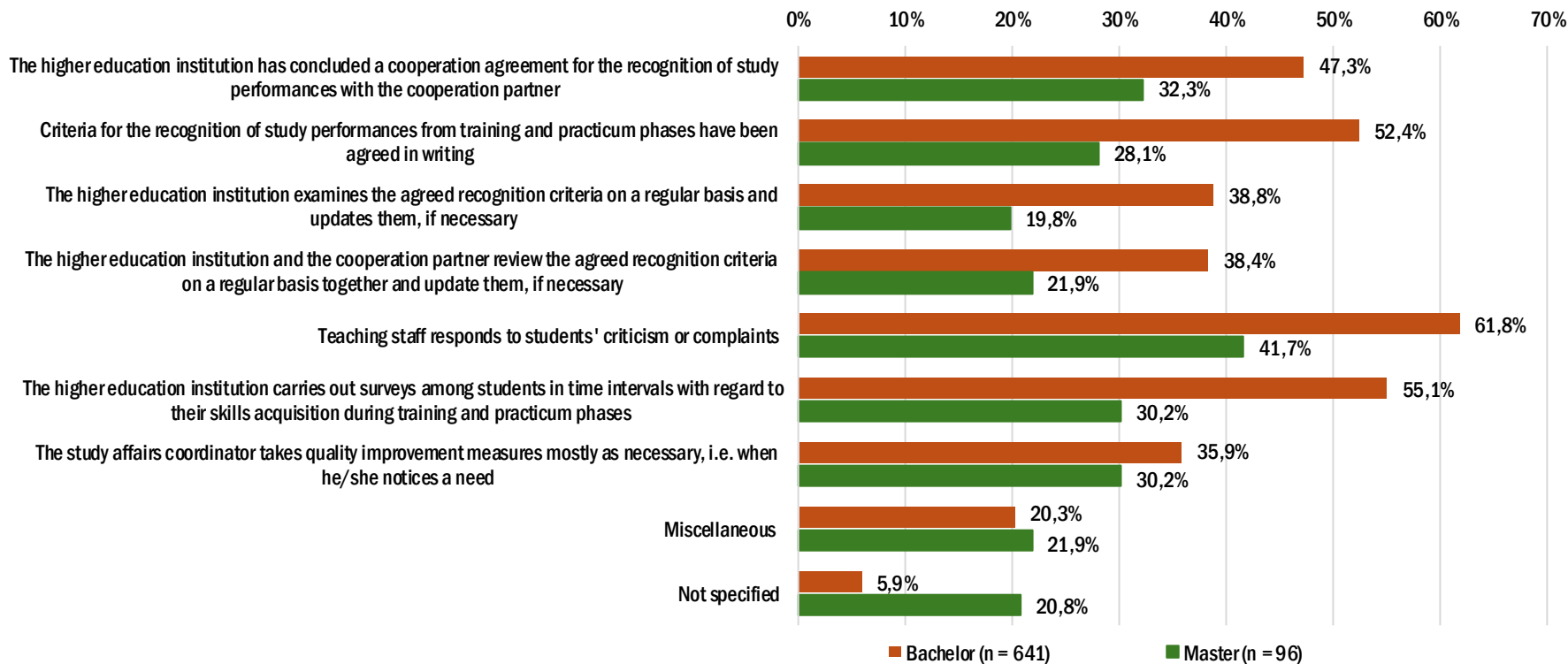
But there are still a lot of challenges especially concerning Quality Assurance (QA):

- Protection of the core values of dual studies by a clear separation between really integrative study programmes, which reliably interlock theory and practice, and only accompanying study programmes, in which both parts are loosely coupled like in part-time studies.
- Warranty of high quality of the courses at HEI as well as of the practical training in the cooperating companies. In Germany HEI are in charge not only for the QA in their own institution but also for the QA in the practice phases in the companies. This is difficult, because the competences and the coverage of the HEI are often not sufficient.

Development of Accreditation to a true Quality Label

- In 2013 the German Science and Humanities Council (Wissenschaftsrat) developed defining criteria for dual study programmes.
- Followed by a reform of the accreditation system, which led to a new model legal ordinance being agreed upon and implemented by the 16 federal states in 2017.
- For the first time, this development led to clear requirements for dual study programmes in Germany.
- Since then, only forms of study that can be clearly assigned to one of the following three organisational types may be designated as dual study programmes.
- On the other hand, study programmes that are merely accompanied by vocational training or practice phases (ausbildungs- bzw. praxisbegleitende Studiengänge) but where no formal integration takes place are not considered as dual study programmes anymore. This caused discontent at several HEI, which lost their successful brand.

Use of QA instruments for practical phases by HEI



Source: online survey among dual Bachelor and Master study affairs coordinators, CHE Centre for Higher Education 2021; pro rata; n = shown in the figure (665 respondents); question asked: "How do you assure the quality of study performances from training or practicum phases/professional activities?" (multiple answers allowed)

- I. Current developments in the German Dual Higher Education area
- II. Challenges relating to the Quality Assurance of Dual Study Programmes
- III. **Conclusion**

Conclusion

- The core brand of dual study programmes in Germany is the close interlock between academic and vocational learning. A lot of efforts are continuously needed to assure this specific quality. This affects the institutional level as well as the accreditation on the national level.
- The tightening of accreditation rules was a crucial factor for an adjustment and clearer labelling of dual study programmes in Germany. Nevertheless there is still a big variety of dual study programmes, which causes orientation problems for prospective students. Particularly the contracts with the employers cause often uncertainty.
- Dual studies are an exclusive sector in Germany. Only about 5 % of all students are enrolled in a dual study programme. It is very difficult to expand the offers, because cooperating companies are needed. Only specific companies are willing to be active in this field. Here a quantitative boundary occurs.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Contact:

Dr. Sigrun Nickel

Centre for Higher Education

Head of Higher Education Research

Phone +49 5241 9761-23 | E-Mail: sigrun.nickel@che

