



The Bielefeld studying and teaching model

Studying and Teaching at Bielefeld University

Founded in 1969, Bielefeld University was set up explicitly as a research university aiming to deliver high-quality, research-oriented teaching. Nowadays, it boasts 13 faculties covering a differentiated range of subjects in the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and engineering. With approximately 18,500 students, it is one of Germany's leading medium-sized universities.

At Bielefeld University, a culture of communication has evolved between all students and staff. This culture is characterized by an exceptional openness toward new and even unusual ideas, and has served as the basis for important, forward-looking decisions that have contributed decisively to the University's achievements. One example is the success in the 2007 Excellence Initiative with the 'Cognitive Interaction Technology (CITEC)' Cluster and the 'Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology' (BGHS) – a success repeated when both projects were granted continued funding in 2012. A major contribution to developing strategic concepts to optimize studying and teaching has come from the 'Paths to a new culture of studying and teaching' programme – a winner in the 'Exzellente Lehre' [excellent teaching] competition. These concepts are being applied in even more depth and breadth within the 'Richtig einsteigen!' [Getting off to a good start] programme promoted by the Teaching Quality Pact. An initiative by the Joint Science Conference (GWK) of the German federal and state governments to improve study conditions and teaching quality.

This approach is also reflected in the general examination regulations that are valid for all the university's degree programmes. This standardized system applies all fundamental regulations (such as those on awarding credit points, compensation for incapacities, combining studying and family life) to all students in the same way. The subject-specific regulations for each degree course are laid down in the subject curriculum along with any supplementary amendments to the general examination regulations.

■ Generally one examination per module

The policy for developing modules at Bielefeld University is to implement a range of different competence-oriented types of examination. These ensure a sufficient proportion of self-instruction to grant students sufficient scope for their own proactive studies. Competence acquisition is generally assessed with an examination either covering all the teaching units in a module or – in the sense of exemplary learning – using one module element to assess competence acquisition across the entire module. In addition, there are no limits on repeating examinations. Instead, all examinations – whether successful or not – are documented in the transcript.

■ Standard module sizes

The standard module size of generally 10 CPs makes it particularly easy to share or exchange teaching units between subjects and across degree programmes. This simplifies transitions between degree programmes while enhancing the transparency and ease of studying. Standard module sizes also make it possible to develop innovative and interdisciplinary degree programmes by importing single modules from other programmes or by exporting single modules to other programmes.

■ Almost limitless ways of combining one's major and minors

To extend the possible combinations of degree programmes and make each subject accessible to as many students as possible, the classic minor with 60 CP has been augmented by a new study feature: the double minor, two 30-CP subjects. The result is more than 1,100 different ways of combining subjects in a Bachelor with major and (double) minor alongside the attractive range of Bachelor with single major degree programmes. This all enables students to pursue their own academic interests without restrictions.

Master degree programme

Bielefeld University offers more than 35 – part interdisciplinary, part international – Master degree programmes leading to either a Master of Arts or a Master of Science. Each programme is either an extension of or a specialization in the previous Bachelor degree programme.

Study Model

Bielefeld was one of the first universities in Germany to reorganize all its degrees (except for the first state examination in law) as Bachelor and Master programmes. Bielefeld University's study model takes full advantage of this study structure by offering a great variety of individually designed degree programme profiles and types within a flexibly standardized framework. One particular feature of Bielefeld University's Bachelor degree programmes is that they are all embedded in a standardized and transparent study model. This delivers a framework for numerous potential combinations of subjects, making it far easier to switch between different degree programmes and build up an individual profile.

The major building blocks of the Bielefeld model are:

■ The same principal regulations for all Bachelor and Master degree programmes

Bielefeld University's approach is for both teachers and students to share responsibility for a high standard of study. The University expects its students to be interested in the specifics aspects of an academic education and to pursue it actively. Through their participation in lectures and seminars and through working together with their colleagues, the students themselves contribute to the success of studying and teaching.

■ Elective Module

The Elective Module offers students the opportunity to develop their own clear individual profile. Bachelor degree programmes assign 30 credit points to this subject; Master degree programmes, an optional maximum of 20. Depending on a student's interests, the Elective Module can be used to study a major subject in more depth, to specialize, to find out something about another subject, to take a special course or as a chance to spend a semester in another country.

Further specific elements of Bielefeld University's Bachelor degree programme are:

■ Types of degree

The study model offers various types of Bachelor degree programme (leading to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science). Students can choose between a:

- Bachelor with single major (150 CP)
- Bachelor with major (90 CP) and minor (60 CP)
- Bachelor with major (90 CP) and double minor (30 + 30 CP)

All types of programme also require the Elective Module (30 CP).

Careers in teaching

Students wishing to pursue a teaching career have to choose a teacher-training Bachelor leading to a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science for one of the following four school types:

- Advanced secondary (Gymnasium) and comprehensive school (GymGe)
- Secondary (Hauptschule and Realschule) and comprehensive school (HRGe)
- Primary school (G)
- Primary school specializing in inclusive education

As far as possible, these types of degree programme are structured to match a Bachelor with major and minor. This makes it easier to switch between the types of programme and transfer one's credit points.

The teacher-training Bachelor has to be followed by a Master of Education (M.Ed.) for the chosen type of school.



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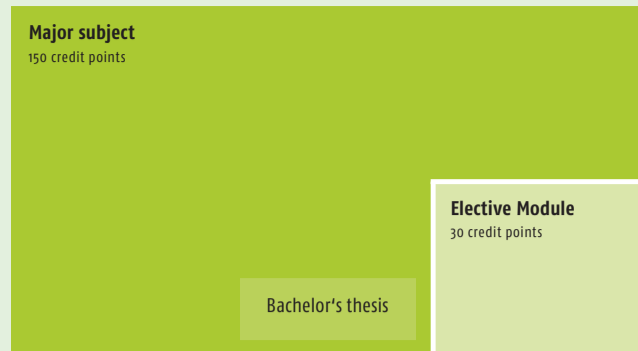
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Study model – Types of degree

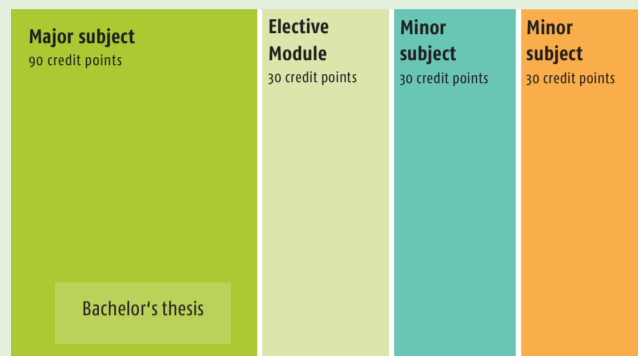
Bachelor with single major (6 semesters)



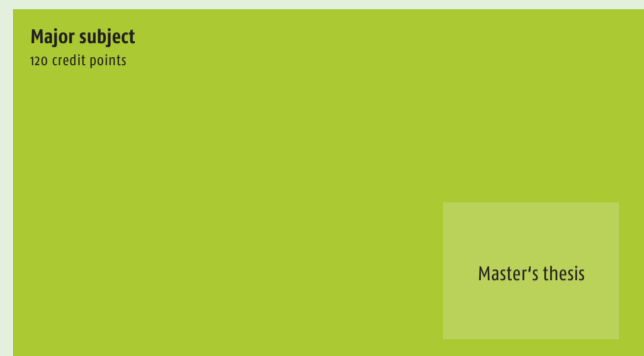
Bachelor with major and minor (6 semesters)



Bachelor with major and double minor (6 semesters)



Master of Arts/Master of Science (4 semesters)



Advanced secondary and comprehensive school (GymGe)

Teacher-training Bachelor (6 semesters)

Advanced secondary and comprehensive school (GymGe)



Master of Education (4 semesters)

Advanced secondary and comprehensive school (GymGe)

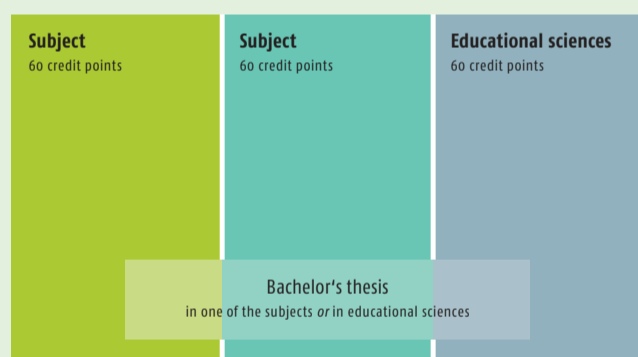


¹ Continuation of the major subject from the Bachelor degree programme
² Continuation of the minor subject from the Bachelor degree programme

Secondary (Hauptschule and Realschule) and comprehensive school (HRGe)

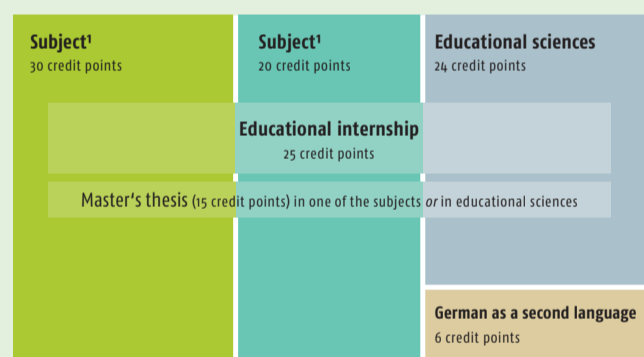
Teacher-training Bachelor (6 semesters)

Secondary (Hauptschule and Realschule) and comprehensive school (HRGe)



Master of Education (4 semesters)

Secondary (Hauptschule and Realschule) and comprehensive school (HRGe)

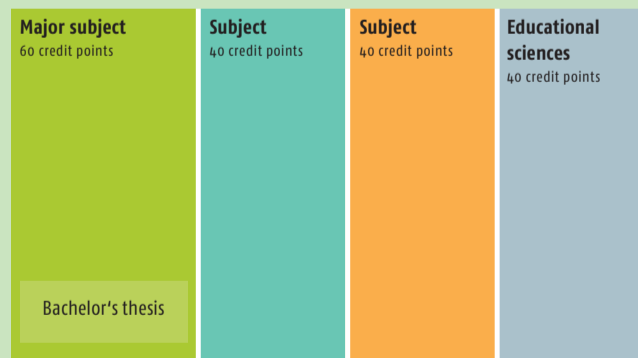


¹ Continuation of both subjects from the Bachelor degree programme

Primary school (G)

Teacher-training Bachelor (6 semesters)

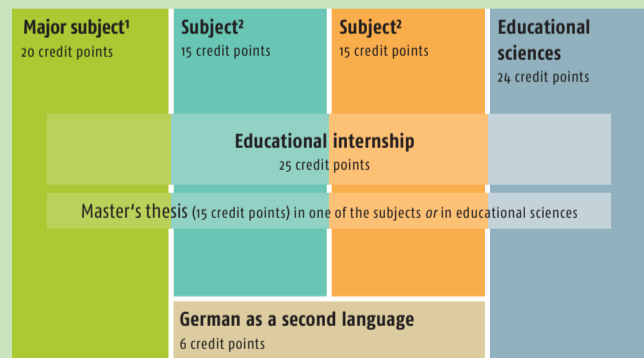
Primary school (G)



Important: Basic Mathematics and Basic Language Training are compulsory subjects

Master of Education (4 semesters)

Primary school (G)

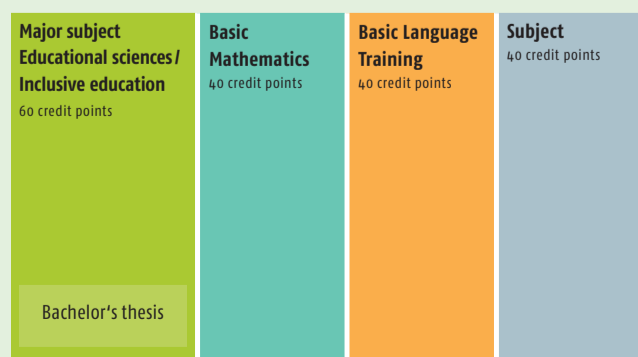


¹ Continuation of the major subject from the Bachelor degree programme
² Continuation of the subject from the Bachelor degree programme

Primary school specializing in inclusive education

Teacher-training Bachelor (6 semesters)

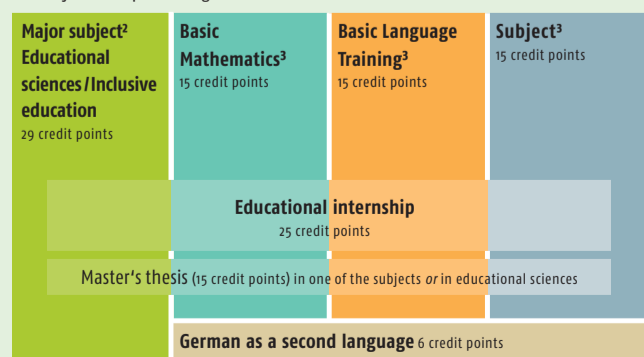
Primary school specializing in inclusive education¹



¹ An additional one-year study course is required.
 Special education subjects are 'Emotional and social development' and 'Learning'

Master of Education (4 semesters)

Primary school specializing in inclusive education¹



¹ An additional one-year study course is required.
 Special education subjects are 'Emotional and social development' and 'Learning'
² Continuation of the major subject from the Bachelor degree programme
³ Continuation of the subject from the Bachelor degree programme