

College Planning for Abitur and Diploma Students

(including studying in Germany with the High School Diploma)

Please note that the counselors at the John F. Kennedy School do their best possible to stay updated on the following information; however, it is each student's responsibility to follow-up and do their own research as it relates to individual circumstances. *Each student profile is unique and as such, should be applied individually based on university admission criteria. JFKS takes no credit or responsibility for decisions made regarding students' applications.*

Abstract:

The John F. Kennedy School (JFKS) offers students the opportunity to not only earn the German Abitur offered in Germany, but also the American High School Diploma. Considering which direction to take, whether the Abitur or High School Diploma path, is one of the most important decisions students will make in High School while attending JFKS. This decision is based on many different factors: depending on what the student wants to study, possible career choice, where they want to go, financial ability to pay, and language preference, both advantages and disadvantages arise based on which path each student chooses to take. Both the Abitur and the Diploma are recognized in Germany and the United States as long as certain qualifications are met. This means it is possible to study in Germany with the High School Diploma as long as students carefully plan their course or study while at JFKS. The following are questions and answers commonly asked.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Does where I plan to study determine which degree I should take?

- Yes, but it is important to know that both the Abitur and Diploma can be acknowledged and utilized in different places.
- The Abitur is recognized by the U.S. as a foreign credential. The U.S. looks not only at your 11th and 12th grade "combination grade" given to Abitur students, but also your GPA, which accumulates from the 9th grade through 12th grade. Canada and Australia also look at your credentials with this system.
- The Diploma is recognized by Germany (as long as certain qualifications are met).
- All JFKS Abitur students will also earn the Diploma unless subject failures prevent the student from earning the proper 26 credits. Both the Abitur and the high school Diploma are now earned in 12 years.

Q: Is it possible to go to a German university with an American High School Diploma plus AP exam results, rather than the Abitur? When is it advisable for a student planning on studying in Germany to go for the High School Diploma?

- Yes, a student can combine AP exam results with the High School Diploma to study in Germany. The AP classes that you take depend on what you

want to study (see the 'more information' section at the end). The AP exams are given annually in May (dates are the same worldwide) and results are available in early July. Please note that you must take the AP exam to get the score needed for German universities (simply taking the AP class is not enough). It is possible to start on the Diploma track in 9th grade. The latest recommended grade to switch is before 11th grade (when you can begin taking AP classes). Basically, no matter which program you select, maintaining your grades is of utmost importance. You must have a 3.0 unweighted GPA minimum (as of 2016, the unweighted GPA must be reported; previously, the weighted GPA's were reported).

Q: Do I have to take AP exams in order to study with my Diploma at a German university?

- . No. If you get a 1300 score on your SAT within the math and reading exams or a 29 on your ACT (for diplomas issued up to May 2014 it was 28 points; as of June 2014, 29 points are now required), you do not technically need any AP exam results. It is recommended to try all the different possible ways in order to ensure success and acceptance. Again, you must have a minimum unweighted 3.0 GPA.

Q: At which German universities are Diploma students accepted and for what studies?

- Not all German universities accept the Diploma, but 400+ universities in Germany do. You can find the list of which universities can be applied to with the Diploma through Uni-Assist: <http://www.uni-assist.de/uni-assist-members.html>. (the German University Application Service for international students.)
- In addition, universities may require you to apply directly to them for admission instead of utilizing Uni-assist. If you are a German or EU citizen utilizing the Diploma, check with the university to which you wish to apply, and also please check requirements at the following website: <http://anabin.kmk.org/>. The website will walk you through what is required. ('Anabin' is an acronym for 'Anerkennung und Bewertung Ausländischer Bildungsnachweise'= Recognition and Evaluation of foreign educational degrees.) Go to the anabin website, click on 'Schulabschlüsse mit Hochschulgang', then on 'Suchen' and type in 'USA' and go to 'Zusatzdokumente'. Please note that this website is in German only. Even if you are not a German/EU citizen, you will see the various options for applying to German universities with a Diploma listed here (AP exams, SAT/ACT scores). Please note that if you have dual German/US nationality, we understand that you must apply as a German citizen although we have heard of exceptions. From experience with former JFKS Diploma graduates, we do not believe this has any impact on the student's application chances. Again, every case is different.

- Depending on which field you wish to study, you should choose certain AP courses while at JFKS: Humanities fields verses Math/Science/Medicine fields (exact requirements are listed further in this document).

Q: What is the minimum/maximum successfully passed number of AP exam requirements for colleges in the U.S.? And for European universities when applying with the Diploma?

- For German universities you need a minimum of 4 to 5 AP exams completed with a score of 3 or higher depending on the area you are studying.
- In the U.S. there is no minimum. Some universities recommend doing 6 APs in 2 years. The U.S. looks at the class grade you get in your AP course and the AP exam score; in contrast, most European universities evaluate your AP exam result instead of the class grade. Of course, the more competitive the American university, the more lucrative it is to take as many AP courses as you can realistically manage (depending upon the university, you may be able to get credit or placement for high AP exam scores. Every university is different so you should check this very carefully).

Q: AP courses can only be taught by qualified teachers at JFKS. How can we ensure course availability in as many subjects as possible in the future?

- There is no way to ensure course availability. Availability is based on the student demand for courses; a high demand for a class will therefore lead to course availability.

Q: From which point on do my grades and grade point average (GPA) count?

- Your transcript and GPA begin from 9th grade on regardless of whether you are an Abitur or Diploma student.

Q: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the timing of declaring Diploma track and what do the respective specific course options in the Diploma Program look like if one declared Diploma in a. 9th grade or b. 11th grade? (Please note: at JFKS a student cannot switch to the Diploma program in 10th grade).

- The key difference are the Sciences. Diploma means you take a year of each science (biology, chemistry, physics). The Abitur mixes each of these sciences in 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade. In the Abi program, 9-10 mixes all three of the sciences. In 11th and 12th grade there is a mix of required sciences. Under the Diploma, biology is taught in 9th grade, chemistry is taught in 10th; 11th and 12th grade provide a choice between Physics, AP Physics, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, or AP Environmental Science. Picking your track accordingly is important and should be timed appropriately in consultation with your counselor.

Q: Can you drop French/Spanish beginning in 9th grade if you declare the Diploma track?

- Yes, HOWEVER, Uni-assist indicated in April 2015 that German citizens should have two additional years of the same world language if the student wants to study at a German university utilizing the US diploma for admission purposes. To be safe, maintaining the language through 10th grade is advised; at JFKS, this can be either French or Spanish.
- Also, if you are only beginning to learn the German language (D3 or D4), you do not need to take French.

Q: German universities consider scholastic achievement for the Abitur starting in 11th grade, and extracurricular activities play a minimal role. But for U.S. colleges, the official transcript and GPA begins in 9th grade, regardless of the student's choice of Abi/Diploma. U.S. college applications consider many outside factors in addition to grades such as sports, activities and community service. What do U.K. colleges consider in the application process?

- 80% of your application to the U.K. must be focused on your intended major and the academic courses you have completed in that area. They first look at your AP exam scores, then your SAT/ACT grades and finally, your GPA. Your minimum GPA must be a 3.0 or 3.5 depending on your area of study and how difficult your university and/or program is to get into. The U.K. is becoming extremely competitive due to the high demand for their academic programs and the rising costs of tuition in the US. The student's personal statement must also focus on their course of study and what has been achieved specifically directed towards the intended course of study.
- In the U.S., it is possible to declare a major even after you begin your studies; in the U.K. it is extremely important to know your intended course of study and switching courses can be difficult or even not permitted at all. The other 20% of the application is everything else.

Q: Is there any way to study at a German university with my Diploma if I don't have the right AP scores, SAT or ACT scores?

Many German universities offer a "Studienkolleg" year for students applying with the Diploma who may not have the test scores (AP, SAT/ACT) that are required. Please study the website 'www.studienkollegs.de'. According to the website, you may apply directly to an individual Studienkolleg or through Uni-assist. Known as a 'Vorbereitungskurs' year (preparation year), you are already within a German university and must take and pass a test at the end of that year.

You must pass the 'Aufnahmeprüfung' exam to enter the Studienkolleg year. You have the option of changing your major as well as the university at the end of that year if you pass the "Feststellungsprüfung" exam. The Studienkolleg year does not lessen the number of years you spend getting your degree, i.e. it is an extra year of study, is available to both German as

well as international students and is highly recommended for international students.

Q: If my German is good but not brilliant, could it still make sense for me to go for the Abitur?

- It depends on how important it is to have the Abitur. Since there are just as many options available with the High School Diploma, ask yourself what the advantage would be of having the Abitur. If you do decide to pursue the Abitur, you must be in at least D2 by 11th grade.

Q: When is it better for a student to take the Abitur even if he or she knows they want to study in the U.S.?

- There are no real advantages of having the Abitur in America instead of the Diploma; however, students should check with their chosen universities (if known early) to determine how their application would be viewed by selection committee members. If you earn the Abitur as well as the Diploma at JFKS, you may have an advantage simply by having earned two high school degrees.
- In the U.S., your Abitur is looked upon as a foreign credential. We currently have some Abitur students self-studying and taking AP exams, which depends upon the student's desire to study independently. With the Abitur, it is also possible to take CLEP tests (College Level Preparatory Examination Program) and save yourself up to a year of college. One can apply with an Abitur and no AP exams to US universities, and it is still possible to 'CLEP' out of certain classes or get credit (especially in the areas of math and language) but this is very specific to each university and should be researched thoroughly. See College Board for more information.
- We do have more and more Abitur students self-studying for AP exams who do fairly well. This would be especially important for studying in the U.S. or even the U.K. if the U.K. university utilizes the tariff point system.
- Please be realistic about the financial costs of studying in the US before applying.

Q: If the Abitur Zeugnis only includes grades 11-12, does an Abitur transcript to US schools also only include these two years?

- No. All JFKS transcripts include grades and a GPA for grades 9 through 12. In addition, selection of the two LK courses is important for what you want to study ('Leistungskurse' = Abitur honors courses). For example, if you wish to study medicine, LK courses in Biology and Chemistry would be recommended.

Q: Applying as a foreigner to a German university, is it true that AP German is sufficient enough to prove my German language skills?

- It depends upon the university. Some university websites acknowledge the AP German exam, this is something to research. Additionally, if you are in at least D-2 for 11th and 12th grade and if you earn a '3-' or 'C' or better in

both 12th grade semesters, we can issue a JFKS Certificate of Proficiency. Lastly, you may take a German proficiency test to achieve the C-1 Standard, which is the level required for university study (note: the Studienkolleg year may not have the same language level requirement).

Q: Do you apply directly to the university in Germany?

- In April, 2014, a Uni-assist representative indicated that German students must FIRST contact their selected universities to determine if the university will require them to have their credentials evaluated by Uni-assist. Uni-assist classifies applicants into 2 different groups with varying rights, those from EU countries and those from non-EU countries. Some universities (or 'Fachhochschulen') may have German students apply directly to them while others may require going through Uni-assist.
- Yes/No. You must apply through Uni-assist if you are applying as a foreigner. You must mail all your documentation to UNI Assist by July 15th. They will notify you if any further documents are needed and they will deliver your applications to the universities to which you are applying. However, more and more universities are requiring that your diploma be verified through Uni-assist, but then require you to fill out an individual university application in addition. Please check the Uni-assist website for the specific universities and their requirements. Additionally, some JFKS students who have applied with the Diploma to the FU, Humboldt or even the TU in Berlin have visited the individual universities and programs to which they are applying to ensure that all goes smoothly with required documents. Most documents needed by JFKS Diploma graduates may be certified by the registrar: the transcript, a copy of the diploma and a language certification if applicable. However, please note that as of 2016, standardized scores (AP, SAT, ACT) must be sent from the College Board to Uni-assist. AP scores may be certified by the registrar to meet the Uni-assist annual deadline of July 15 (because AP scores traditionally come out around July 8) but they must still be sent additionally from the College Board.

Q: Is it true that the Diploma is easier than the Abitur?

- No. There are key differences that distinguish the Abitur from the Diploma; the difficulty depends on what the student picks within either track. All JFKS students must earn a total of 26 credits to graduate with the Diploma and the minimum requirement for the Diploma is 28 hours of classes per week. There is no requirement to take advanced classes; however, students hoping to attend universities should take as rigorous a program as possible to be competitive during the college application process.
- The Abitur requires the focus of subjects called Leistungskurse (Honors). You must also take **five** final 12th grade exams in total.
- Under the Diploma you can take as few or as many Advanced Placement (AP) classes as your schedule allows (some classes are only offered as AP classes). However, most diploma students who wish to continue their

education at a college or university are strongly encouraged to take as many AP courses as they can manage to improve their chances to obtain admission to their colleges of choice.

- These distinguishing characteristics have advantages and disadvantages each way and cover different levels of difficulty. Also, it depends on which language you find more difficult to learn and test in.

More Information: Qualifications necessary for entrance to a German University for High School Diploma Students (translated from uni-assist.de/zulassungsvoraussetzungen/index, 14.09.09.):

The following are guidelines to obtain possible admittance to German universities with the High School Diploma. The GED is not accepted.

The High School Diploma must be awarded after visiting an American high school between the grades 9-12 and having gained a total of 16 academic units (credits) (John F. Kennedy School students need 26 credits in order to graduate; our credit requirements differ slightly from the ones listed here).

- 4 credits in English, each with the minimum grade of C: English IV or Honors or AP English
- 2 credits in a second language
- 3 credits in social studies
- 5 credits in combined mathematics and sciences with the minimum grade of C in each course:

2 or 3 credits of mathematics e.g. Algebra II or III, Trigonometry or Pre-Calculus (UNI-Assist indicated in April 2014 that the preference of German universities is Pre-Calculus OR AP Calculus over AP Statistics —regardless of what the area of study, students need to reach the Pre-Calculus level of math) with the minimum grade of C (you may be asked for a course description of our Pre-Calculus course.)

2 or 3 credits of science e.g. Biology, Chemistry or Physics (minimum grade: C).

- 2 credits in any academic subject

Please keep in mind that one of the documents you will submit to Uni-assist will be your certified JFKS transcript. If you transferred into our school after the beginning of 9th grade, you may be asked for a transcript from your prior school, and you may be asked to explain the transfer credits. You should check with your counselor to prepare for this ahead of time.

SUMMARY: A John F. Kennedy School student earning the High School Diploma may apply for entry to the German university system combined with any one of the following options (*again, we recommend trying as many different ways as possible in order to ensure success and acceptance*). Students who check with individual universities may find that requirements differ; we can only pass on the German government recommendations but do not vouch for each university's application system.

1. **SAT exam** with a combined score of 1300 or higher on the critical reading & mathematics sections AND at least a 3.0 GPA. (Please note, as long as the score adds up to 1300 the score for each item is somewhat flexible.)
2. **ACT exam** with a composite (average) score of 29 AND at least a 3.0 GPA.
3. **AP exam results: for entrance to study mathematical subjects, medicine, natural sciences, pharmaceuticals and technology:**

1 Advanced Placement exam in Mathematics (AP Calculus AB or BC) (*at this time, JFKS does not offer AP Calculus BC*).

1 natural science subject (AP Biology or AP Chemistry or the two halves of AP Physics C). (As of Fall 2016, students may sign up to take the AP Physics C: Mechanics class which prepares them for one half of the required AP Physics C exam.

1 language exam (AP French, AP Spanish, AP Latin, AP German, AP English Literature & Composition or AP English Language & Composition)

1 further subject equivalent to a 12th grade class ex.: AP European History, AP American History, AP Computer Science or two ‘half’ AP Macroeconomics and Microeconomics (*i.e. both exams must be taken; at this time, JFKS does not offer these Economics courses; AP Computer Science will be offered depending upon the demand*).

Please note that some JFKS students have self-studied for some of these AP exams where the course(s) are not offered currently at our school. Please refer also to ‘hochschulstart.de’ for studies in medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy or dentistry as the application process may be quite different in these fields.

4. **AP exam results: for entry to study in the arts, humanities, law, psychology, social studies and economics.**

Advanced Placement exam in English (AP English Literature or AP English Language and Composition)

1 further foreign language (AP French, AP Spanish, AP Latin or AP German)

1 mathematical or natural science subject { AP Calculus AB or BC, AP Biology, AP Chemistry or two halves of AP Physics C (*please see above for JFKS specific notes*)

(1 further subject equivalent to a 12th grade class for example: AP European History, AP American History, AP Computer Science or two ‘half’ AP Macroeconomics and Microeconomics (*please see above for JFKS specific notes*).

5. **For business studies, Uni-assist has told JFKS that students may choose either of the above routes but must inform themselves whether their specific desired business study requires good mathematical skills or a different variety of skills; this will influence the AP exams results which are required.**

Again, please note that some JFKS students have self-studied for some of these AP exams where the course(s) are not offered currently at our school.

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