

# College Planning

## for *Abitur* and *Diploma* Students

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### CONTENTS

- Abstract** ..... 1
- Diploma vs Abitur** ..... 1
  - Frequently Asked Questions ..... 2
- High School Diploma in Germany** ..... 6
  - Frequently Asked Questions ..... 6
  - Specific Guidelines..... 10
- University Information** ..... 13
  - German universities ..... 13
  - U.S. colleges..... 13
  - UK universities..... 13

## Abstract:

The counselors at the John F. Kennedy School (JFKS) do their best 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. Students: do your due diligence when it comes to making these important decisions.

## Diploma vs Abitur

JFKS offers you the opportunity to not only earn the German Abitur offered in Germany but also the American High School Diploma. Choosing between the Abitur or High School Diploma program is one of the most important decisions you will make in High School while attending JFKS. This decision is based on many different factors: what you want to study, your possible career choices, where you want to live, your financial situation, and language preference. Advantages and disadvantages can arise based on which path you choose to take. Both the Abitur and the Diploma are recognized in Germany and the United States as long as certain qualifications are met.

If you choose the Abitur program, you may earn BOTH the Abitur and High School Diploma, should you fulfill all requirements. In order to earn the High School Diploma you must receive the following credits:

## High School Diploma Requirements

Total credits required: **26**

**English: 4 credits**

**Mathematics: 3 credits** (U.S. Colleges prefer 4 credits in Algebra I and higher)

**Social Studies: 4 credits** (3 if you were not enrolled at JFKS for 4 years) which must include U.S. History

**Science: 4 credits**

**PE/Sport: 2 credits**

**German: 1 credit** for each year enrolled at JFKS

**+Electives to total 26**

To request a transcript, **email** Ms. Mack and **stop by** to see her personally in Haus Reil. Your transcript reflects your grades from 9-12, credits earned, and current GPA.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q: Does where I plan to study determine which program I should choose?*

A: 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 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade “combination grade” given to Abitur students, but also your GPA, which accumulates from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. (Canada and Australia also look at your credentials with the GPA system.)
- The Diploma is recognized by Germany as long as certain qualifications are met (see *Specific Guidelines* for more information).
- All JFKS Abitur students will also earn the Diploma unless subject failures prevent the student from earning the proper 26 credits. Since 2012 both the Abitur and the High School Diploma are earned in 12 years.

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

A: No. There are key differences that distinguish the Abitur from the Diploma; the difficulty depends on what courses the student picks within either track. As presented above, JFKS students must earn a total of 26 credits to graduate with the Diploma; additionally, 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. Keep in mind: quality over quantity.

### **Abitur**

- Requires the focus of subjects called *Leistungskurse* (Honors).
- Students choose **two** Honors courses.
- Students must also take **five** final 12th grade exams in total.

### **Diploma**

- 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).
- Students can sit for AP examinations in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, & 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

These distinguishing characteristics have advantages and disadvantages either way and cover different levels of difficulty. Students, you should also consider which language you prefer testing in.

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

A: 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 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

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

A: Your transcript and GPA begin from 9th grade on regardless of whether you are an Abitur or Diploma student. It is possible to start on the Diploma track in 9th grade. The latest recommended grade to switch is before 11th grade (when you may begin taking AP classes; however, keep in mind that 10<sup>th</sup> graders now also have the option to take “AP Seminar” since 2017/18).

*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 10<sup>th</sup> grade).*

A: The key difference is the second foreign language requirement for the Abitur. In the Diploma students are not required to have a second foreign language but may opt to continue it to keep their options open. Picking your track accordingly is important and should be timed appropriately in consultation with your counselor.

*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.?*

A: 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. JFKS currently has 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 U.S. 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.
- Our school has more and more Abitur students self-studying for AP exams, and they perform 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.

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

A: 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.

# High School Diploma in Germany

It is possible to study in Germany with the High School Diploma as long as you carefully plan your course of study while at JFKS. Note, the High School Diploma alone is not enough. Beyond the degree itself, you must have a particular GPA and complete certain basic courses. After that, there are still additional requirements which can be fulfilled by either:

1. Getting certain scores on certain AP exams
2. Doing a year college-prep program to prepare you for the German university

uni-assist, the German office through which you apply with your High School Diploma in Germany ([German University Application Service for international students](#)) spells out the details of these different options (see below *Specific Guidelines*). This complicated, highly detailed application process is subject to change at any time.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q: How can I use my AP exam results in combination with the Diploma to study in Germany?*

A: First of all, the AP classes that you take depend on what you want to study. See JFKS' website for a list of AP courses offered (AP Brochure). You may also self-study for AP exams. 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). If you have these scores but do maintain a high enough GPA overall, your diploma in combination with these exam results will not be accepted; **you must have a minimum 3.0 unweighted GPA** (as of 2016, the *unweighted* GPA must be reported; previously, the *weighted* GPA was reported).

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

A: Not necessarily. You may also attend a year-long "Studienkolleg" program which prepares you for studies at a German university. In the past, students have also been able to submit SAT and ACT scores with 1360 or 29. However, **please note**

**that as of October 2018, the guidelines have changed, and SAT and ACT scores will NO LONGER be accepted or reviewed.**

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

A: It is important to know that 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: <https://www.uni-assist.de/tools/uni-assist-hochschulen/>
- 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/>. This 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’. 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. **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 under *Specific Guidelines*).

*Q: Is there any way to study at a German university with my Diploma if I don’t have the right AP scores?*

A: Yes. As mentioned, many German universities offer a Studienkolleg year for students applying with the Diploma who may not have the test scores required. Please study the website [www.studienkollegs.de](http://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. Since a Bachelor’s degree takes 3 years to complete in Germany, it would take you 4 years total including the Studienkolleg year; this is equivalent to the number of years it takes for a degree in the states. This program is available to both German as well as international students and is highly recommended for international students.

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

A: 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 D2 for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade and if you earn a 3- (or C) or better in both 12<sup>th</sup> grade semesters, the Registrar in Haus Reil 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: Can you drop French/Spanish beginning in 9th grade if you declare the Diploma track?*

A: 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 10<sup>th</sup> grade is advised; at JFKS, this can be either French or Spanish.

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

A: 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.

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, AP scores must be sent *directly* from the College Board to uni-assist. AP student score reports **MUST** be printed off and certified by the Registrar to meet the uni-assist annual deadline of July 15 (because AP scores traditionally come out around July 8). They must still be sent ***additionally digitally*** directly from the College Board. You complete this request to send scores directly to uniassist via your College Board account.

## Specific Guidelines:

### ***Qualifications necessary for entrance to a German University for High School Diploma Students***

The following are guidelines to obtain possible admittance to German universities with the High School Diploma. The GED (General Educational Development Test) 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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. 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)

**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, for example: 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; both AP Computer Science A and AP Computer Science Principles are accepted by uni-assist*)

*(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.)*

**2. 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

World History

or two 'half' AP Macroeconomics and Microeconomics (*please see above for JFKS specific notes*)

- 3. 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.

# University Information:

**German Universities:** consider scholastic achievement for the Abitur starting in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, and extracurricular activities play a minimal role.

**U.S. Colleges & Universities:** the official transcript and GPA begins in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, regardless of the student's choice of Abi/Diploma. They consider many outside factors in addition to grades such as sports, activities, and community service. It is possible to declare a major even after you begin your studies.

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. 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.

**UK Universities:** 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 U.S. 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. Again, 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.

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