

Resolution of the
30th General Assembly of
the German Rectors'
Conference
on 27 April 2021
Video conference

**Requirements for further
development of the Fed-
eral Training Assistance
Act (BAföG)**

HRK German Rectors' Conference

The Voice of the Universities

Leipziger Platz 11
10117 Berlin, Ger-
many

Tel.: +49 (0) 30
206292-0
Fax: +49 (0) 30
206292-15

post@hrk.de
[https://www.hrk.
de/home](https://www.hrk.de/home)

Ahrstraße 39
53175 Bonn

post@hrk.de

Requirements for further development of the Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG)

The 30th General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference calls on the parties standing for election to the 20th Bundestag to initiate fundamental reform of the Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG) in the coming legislative period. The amendments made to BAföG in 2019 were a step in the right direction, but they were insufficient.

Still, only a small minority of students are eligible for benefits. The vast majority have to depend on parental support or to finance their living expenses themselves. The federal government's emergency funding during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is controversial and widely regarded as inadequate, has once again brought the issue of student funding and the topic of fair access to higher education into focus. Rapid price increases in rent and living costs in many large university cities, as well as growing necessities related to mobility and technical equipment, have resulted in a rise in financial requirements for studying over the years. What this shows is that the BAföG system and contents no longer reflect the reality of life of students. In the future, the diversity of students must be taken into account, with options for part-time studies being provided and the age limits becoming flexible enough to properly accommodate continuing education degree programmes. In addition, funding must be made more accessible, primarily by re-adjusting allowances. Last but not least, an emergency protocol for exceptional personal or social situations should be added and this should apply to international students, too.

The General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference emphasises the following key points in particular:

1. Assessing entitlement to funding

The basis of the current BAföG regulations celebrates its 50th birthday in 2021. In 1972, 44.6% of students were supported by BAföG (270,000 BAföG recipients out of 606,000 enrolled students). In 1982, huge restrictions were placed on BAföG, which was originally designed as a full subsidy and was then only granted as a full loan¹.

In 2019, only around 12% of all students received BAföG funding. Despite the sharp increase in student numbers, the number of students receiving funding remained the same. The aim of BAföG should be to at least restore the original funding rate to ensure that the decision to take up studies does not depend on

¹ After reunification, there was a switch to the half-subsidy model that is still in place to this day.

parental income. This requires a redesign of parental income and asset allowances, not just regular adjustment revisions.

2. Standard course duration

The eligibility criterion of the standard course duration no longer fully reflects the complex reality of life within a large and diverse student body. Only 33.6% of students are able to graduate within the standard course duration (2019); 77%, however, succeed in the standard period of study plus 2 semesters. This should be covered in BAföG.

3. Age limit

To promote lifelong learning and given changes to professional life and the foreseeable great need for skilled workers, the age limit² should be lifted. Educational pathways are becoming increasingly diverse (e.g. studies after training, after a BA degree, a few years of professional experience followed by an MBA degree) and BAföG must also follow this path in the future. Incidentally, orientation programmes/semesters and continuing education/certificate programmes should also lead to a funding entitlement in the future.

4. Part-time studies

BAföG continues to exclude students who are enrolled in part-time studies, who are currently not eligible. The HRK is in favour of opening up BAföG to introduce a flexible partial entitlement for part-time students. This would also reflect the reality of life in which part-time students often pursue employment or have other reasons for enrolling in a part-time degree programme, such as chronic illness or additional burdens due to care work (childcare, care of relatives, etc.), which predominantly affects women, but also higher education policy or social commitment.

5. Emergency aid

Crisis management in nationwide emergencies also entails an emergency aid programme for students whose funding sources have been lost due to the crisis. BAföG needs an emergency aid component that enables students to receive pragmatic and rapid assistance in individual cases, even if they do not receive any funding in the normal course of their studies.

² The age limit for funding is currently 30 years in accordance with Section 10 Paragraph 3 of BAföG, and 35 years for a master's degree.

