

To whom it may concern Bachelor professional CCI

Skills-upgrading vocational training in Germany is a form of professional further training which is almost nowhere to be found in other countries. It is especially in small- and medium-sized German companies that those gaining advanced qualifications play a key role, for they are often in positions of responsibility.

The "IHKs" (*Industrie- und Handelskammer* or Chambers of Commerce and Industry) are the bodies responsible in Germany for holding the advanced vocational training examinations administered under public law for the industrial, business, commercial and service sectors. The IHKs fulfil this task in place of the state authorities. The legal basis under German federal law is the "BBiG" (German Vocational Training Act). The procedures to be observed are laid down in the further training and examination regulations of the IHK responsible. Publicly appointed examination boards constituted on a basis of parity hold the examinations and decide on the final grades.

The examination candidates are either sector specialists who have built on their expertise, or are functional specialists who assume responsibilities independent of the sector. By preparing for and passing the examination they demonstrate not only their specialist, methodical and soft skills, but also the leadership skills they have acquired.

The German titles for the higher qualifications gained in the business and commercial fields are either "Fachwirt" for the sector specialists or "Fachkaufmann", and also, for example, "Controller", "Bilanzbuchhalter" and "Pharmareferent", for the commercial functional specialists. The higher qualifications awarded in the industrial and technical sectors are "Industriemeister" (sector specialist) and "Fachmeister" (functional specialist).

Certificate holders can look back on a pathway of education and training that has taken them through three years of vocational education and training culminating in a final examination, followed by at least three years of relevant work experience, learning phases in a course by means of distance learning or through self-study, and an examination administered under public law. It is also possible to gain admission to the examination by having several years of work experience in fields of work relevant for the examination.

Their advanced vocational training may require up to 1,200 hours of learning time. The examination they sit consists of several parts comprising both written and oral examinations, and lasts over 10 hours.

With regard to the standard of achievement they reflect, these examinations should be ranked in terms of both input and output criteria at the Bachelor degree level as defined in the Bologna reform. The knowledge, skills and competences evidenced by advanced vocational training examinations are – in the business community's estimation – therefore on a par with those acquired by university graduates.

Bearing in mind that their status needs to be made more transparent politically and internationally, the Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammertag DIHK, the umbrella organisation of the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, proposes that the title "Bachelor Professional CCI" be used. At the same time the DIHK advocates classifying the qualifications at level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework [KOM(2006) 479 final]. The "Bachelor Professional CCI" award is not a university degree.