

## **What is a Bachelor? Responses from Germany**

**Bologna Seminar  
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# Structure of Presentation

- Some special Features of the German Higher Education System and the role of the HRK
- What does Bologna mean for Germany, why Bachelors?
- Legal provisions: What is a Bachelor (Ba)?
- Two practical examples: Ba in Philosophy and Economics and Ba in Mechanical Engineering
- Feedback from Industry and Society

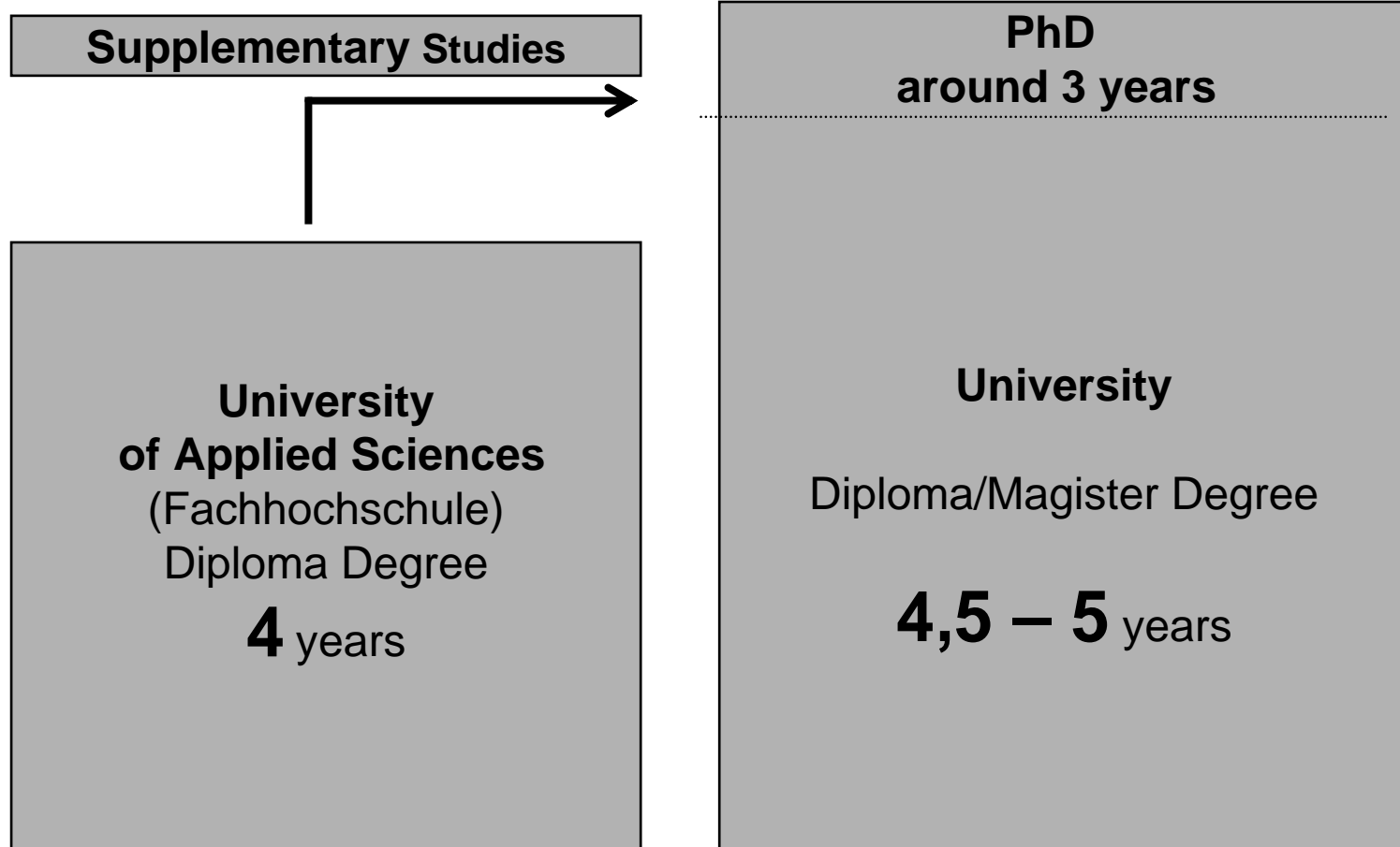
# What does Bologna mean for Germany?

- Complete restructuring of all study programmes from integrated long to two-cycle programmes
- Not just a formal restructuring but „change of paradigm“:  
from a teacher perspective to a learner perspective  
(modularisation, learning outcomes, competences, TUNING)
- Introducing ECTS and a modular study structure
- Quality assurance, incl. accreditation

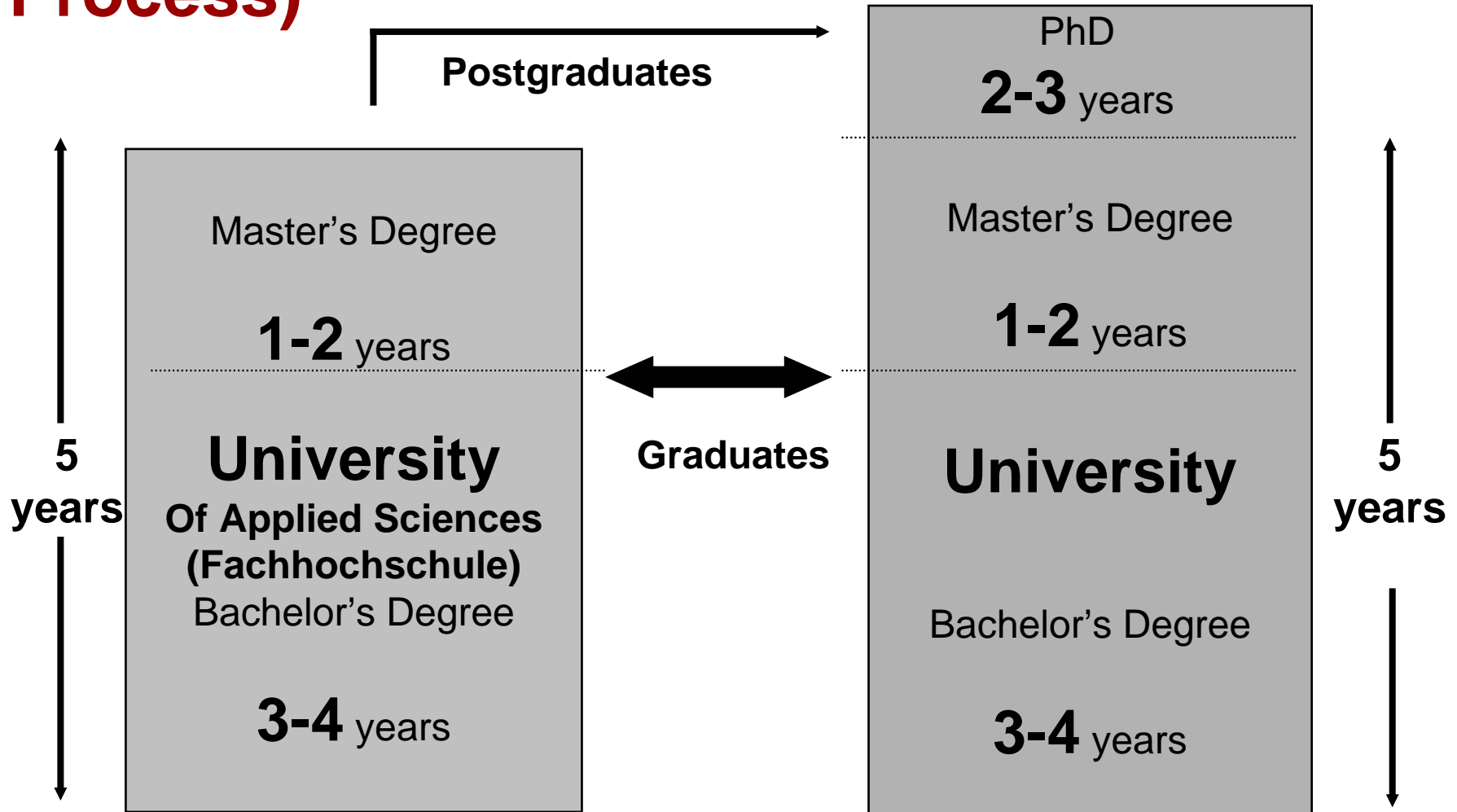
# Why Bachelor degrees in Germany?

- Very long study durations in many disciplines, high drop out rates
- Traditional long integrated programmes did not leave room for flexibility and new study profiles
- Recognition problems with incoming and outgoing students, since the large majority of HE systems around the world are structured in an undergraduate and a graduate cycle

# Higher Education in Germany - traditionally



# Bachelor's and Master's Degrees (Bologna Process)



# Legislative changes: Federal level

New Higher Education Framework Act of 1998  
(1 year before Bologna!):

- Deregulation
- Increased autonomy for Higher Education Institutions
- Competition
- Quality Assurance
- Internationalisation

# Particular relevance of the new Framework Act:

- Introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees on experimental basis (3+2 or 4+1 model)
- Modular structure of curricula, use of credit systems
- Quality assurance (evaluation and accreditation)



# Legislative changes: Level of the 16 States

- All 16 states have changed their HE laws to adjust them to the new Framework Act
- The Standing Conference of Ministers of Education of the 16 states agreed in October 2003 on „Common Structural Guidelines“ for Bachelor and Master programmes

# Common Structural Guidelines: Structure and duration of Ba-Degrees

- The Bachelor is the standard qualification, leading to a first entry into a profession for the majority of students
- Being a professional qualification, it must provide the academic foundation, methodological skills and qualifications related to the professional field
- A Bachelor programme may be of 3 – 4 years duration (180-240 ECTS credits), only one type of degree is awarded (no Ba. hon.)

# Common Structural Guidelines: Transitions and Profiles

For reasons of quality assurance, all Ba. programmes require a thesis (6-12 ECTS credits)

- Ba degrees are the standard requirement for admission to an Ma programme
- In exceptional cases holders of a Ba may also be admitted directly to doctoral studies
- There is no distinction between more practice-oriented and more research-oriented Ba programmes (unlike Ma programmes)

# **Common Structural Guidelines: Designation of qualifications**

<b>Subject group</b>	<b>Qualification designation</b>
<b>Languages, Cultural studies, Sport, Social Sciences, Fine Arts</b>	<b>Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)</b>
<b>Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Agriculture, Forestry, Food Sciences</b>	<b>Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)</b>
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>Bachelor of Science or of Engineering (B.Eng.)</b>
<b>Economics</b>	<b>Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science</b>
<b>Law</b>	<b>Bachelor of Laws (LL.B)</b>

# Realisation of the new programmes in Germany

- In the winter semester 2004/2005 **1253 Ba programmes** are offered in Germany (1308 MA):  
23 % of all German study programmes are Ba and Ma
- In May 2004 1/6 of these programmes are accredited
- 82,8 % of all Ba-programmes are limited to 6 semesters (180 ECTS)
- Circa 10 % of German students enrolled in Ba programmes in the winter semester 2003/2004

# Perception of the Bachelor in Germany

- More than 80 % of the new Bachelor programmes last 3 years
- Some employers, professors, students therefore doubt that the Bachelor can be a valid academic degree, making the graduate employable
- Several recent studies shed some light on the perception of the Bachelor's degree in Germany
- Acceptance of Bachelor as an degree varies between disciplines  
(discussed controversially in Engineering and some of the Natural Sciences)

# **Study by the „Institute of the German Economy (IDW)“ on Acceptance and Career Perspectives of Ba/Ma Graduates of German Universities (09. 2004)**

- The large majority of German companies accept both Ba & Ma.
- Approval increases with size of the workforce and share of employees with a university degree
- Two thirds of the firms offer Bachelors the same career opportunities as traditional university graduates, independent of their entry position

# **Study by Hochschul-Informationen-System (2004) „Ba as a springboard - a closer look at Ba careers“**

- Many Ba holders go straight to the labour market, often to regular longterm jobs.
- Those who find regular employment remain there.
- Dissatisfaction with the employment is rarely a motive for continuing studies towards a postgraduate degree.
- Only few Ba are employed under their level of qualification.
- However, Ba profiles are new and firms often are still not sure of where to place the Ba in the hierarchy.



# Information

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# HRK

**Thank you very much  
for your attention!**