

Change of Subject, Different Training Course

Meaning: If the course of study is changed or broken off without a degree, the eligibility for BAföG financial support may be annulled. For a second change it is possible that the type of financial support will be changed later from a half grant and a half interest-free loan to an interest-bearing loan.

Policy: In principle, financial support is provided only for one education set according to a course of study and the degree that is desired. If nevertheless the course of study is changed or the studies are discontinued, there must be special circumstances for the eligibility to remain unchanged. As the study time progresses the requirements for the reasons continually increase. A change before the beginning of the fourth subject-related semester is hardly possible.

It is assumed that the course of study has been changed if the type of training institution remains the same but the field of study or the degree to be attained has changed (biology ? physics or state examination ? Bachelor's degree). Also a different combination in a course of study with more than one subject is a change of subject. In general there is no change of subject irrespective of the names of the subject or the degree insofar as the courses of study are identical or, in particular cases, if all the semesters completed can be credited to the new course of study.

A *withdrawal from studies* is the case when the student no longer attends the institutions of a type of educational institution (e.g. a university) including any internship required in the course of study.

Whether BAföG had previously been received or not is irrelevant for assessing whether a change of subject or a withdrawal from studies is the case. Only the time for training abroad for up to a year can be disregarded.

Requirements: If a change of course or a withdrawal from studies takes place, BAföG will only continue to be provided if there is an important or irrefutable reason for the situation. Therefore a change of subject or withdrawal from studies must be communicated in writing without delay. If there is a second change or if this change does not occur within the first two semesters, an additional explanation is required which must be drafted informally. An important reason must be presented. From the beginning of the fourth subject-related semester or in a master's degree study, an irrefutable reason is required.

Important reason: Broadly speaking, the reason is important if the student – upon considering his interests in contrast to the public interests – decides that the continuation of the initially chosen field of study or training is no longer reasonable.

An important reason therefore could be, for example, a lack of intellectual, psychological or physical suitability for the vocational training or for doing the work required of the profession.

Any questions?

PERSONAL ADVICE

 Tue 9.00–12.00
Thurs 1.00–3.00
During the personal advice sessions we would ask you to refrain from calling us by telephone. We thank you for your understanding.

TELEPHONE ADVICE

 Mon and Wed 10.00–12.00

ZENTRALER INFO-POINT

Phone 0251 837-95 09
 Mon to Thurs 9.00–12.00
and 1.30–4.00
Fri 9.00–12.00
and 1.30–2.00

Another example could be a change in disposition of a serious and fundamental kind. Also a change of ideology or denomination can be accepted as an important reason for specific professions. Another reason that can be recognized is also the admission to a chosen course of studies if previously all applications had been unsuccessful.

If the facts which led to the withdrawal from studies or to a change of subject were known or their importance were clear before the start of the studies, then an assessment as an important reason is not possible. This also applies to a general worsening of the career prospects. Irrefutable reason: The requirements for an irrefutable reason are much higher than those for the acceptance of an important reason. A reason is "irrefutable" only if there is no other choice than continuing the course of study previously carried out or withdrawing from the course (e.g. an unexpected – perhaps as the result of an accident – disability or an allergy to certain substances which make the training or the execution of the desired profession impossible). The failure to pass the intermediate or final examination is not an irrefutable reason.

Immediateness/ semester credit: If students already knew of a fact or became aware of its importance and did not carry out a change of subject or withdraw from their studies without a plausible reason as soon as possible, then it is impossible for the reason to be accepted as important or irrefutable. If semesters can be credited to the new course of study, the change will be evaluated as if it had been carried out earlier.

Procedure: The Office for Financial Study Assistance must simply be informed about the first change of subject or withdrawal before the beginning of the third subject-related semester. If the change of subject or withdrawal is repeated or takes place later, the relevant reasons must be presented. It is recommended to take advantage of personal consultation before submitting the informally drafted justification. It is also possible to decide about the obligatory entitlement up to one year in advance.

The Office for Financial Study Assistance issues a separate notice regarding a change of subject or withdrawal from studies. The notice also contains information about the new maximum financial support term. This is calculated based on the standard period of study of the new subject or after deducting the credited semesters from the study that was discontinued. If there is another change of subject, financial support is offered only as interest-bearing loans for each complete, not credited semester until the end of the maximum support term. Any other kind of support is only possible if the change was the result of an irrefutable reason.

Legal reference

§ 7 section 3 BAföG