

## 10-minute guide | DHBW-VS Language certificates

The purpose of this guide is to explain why students ask for references or certificates of language proficiency, who is entitled to what, and who is responsible for providing it.

### Reasons for wanting a certificate of language proficiency

There are various reasons why students need proof of their English language skills. They may be applying for an internship or study semester abroad, for admission to a postgraduate course (e.g. MBA), or for a job after they graduate. They may need it to apply for a scholarship or a grant, for example to cover their travel costs during an internship. Those hoping to take part in an academic exchange may ask you to complete the DAAD form (see below) or similar. Some students may ask for a character reference, which you may not be in a position to give. Others may ask you for a certificate, which is the responsibility of the Language Department. Some have no specific reason for wanting a certificate; they simply collect whatever they can, just in case. However, 'certificate-chasing' is a habit we should discourage.

### Certificates of language proficiency for compulsory courses

These certificates are awarded to students who have completed a Business English course as part of their bachelor degree. They outline what the students have done in the course, how they were assessed, their final grade, and the target level of the course (level C1 on the scale of the Common European Framework). The certificates are issued by the departmental secretary, and co-signed by the department head and the Business English coordinator.

### Certificates of language proficiency for voluntary courses

Certificates of language proficiency for voluntary courses are awarded to students who have:

- taken part in a language course of at least four semesters (100 hours or more)
- attended classes regularly (minimum 80%, with any absences excused)
- participated actively
- been examined through continuous assessment of oral competence, and a 90-minute written exam at the end of the course.

The certificate shows what the students have done in the course, how they were assessed and the level they attained on to the Common European Reference scale, e.g. B1, B2 or C1.

### The DAAD form

In their second or third semester, students may ask you to complete a form issued by the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst (DAAD). This contains boxes to be ticked indicating the student's level in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is supposed to be filled out by an examiner/assessor (*Prüfer*). This means you would give an assessment based on the student's performance in class and written tests/assignments. If you feel that you are being asked to complete an unreasonable amount of forms, please let us know.

## **'Interim' certificates**

It may not be necessary for you to complete the DAAD form. Instead, students taking a regular Business English course (voluntary or compulsory) can ask the Business English coordinator to issue an interim certificate (*Zwischenzertifikat*). This serves to confirm that the student is enrolled on a course, with a brief description of the course and the target level. However, it does not give an assessment of the student's language proficiency.

## **Situations where certificates cannot be given**

Some students do not attend any regular Business English courses at the DHBW-VS. These students are not entitled to a certificate or assessment of language proficiency either by their teacher or the Language Department. In such cases we recommend that they ask their previous English teacher from school to provide a certificate or to complete the appropriate form.

Students who take extra-curricular 'professional English' workshops are also not entitled to certificates of language proficiency. This is because these short courses do not involve any formal assessment. However, these students may receive a certificate of attendance from the Language Department.

At the DHBW-VS we do not organise language tests for students we have not taught.

## **Other types of references**

The Language Department only certifies proficiency in language skills. If students need a more general character reference, e.g. in order to apply for admission to postgraduate study (Masters), please refer them to the department head (*Studiengangsleiter*).

## **Further help for students**

If students want to know more about language certificates, please refer them to the FAQs on the DHBW-VS website:

<http://www.dhbw-vs.de/ueber-uns/zentrale-einrichtungen/sprachenabteilung/faq-zertifikate.html>.

This information is given in German, and also lists recognised external examinations that students may be interested in.