Planning, Designing, and Applying to Offer Dual Degree Programs/Double Degree Programs

Handbook for Faculties and Departments
Publishing Information

Planning, Designing, and Applying to Offer Dual Degree Programs/Double Degree Programs
Handbook for Faculties and Departments
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Foreword

Dear professors and employees at our faculties and departments,

Double degree programs or dual degree programs (hereafter referred to as DD programs) are valuable tools for developing quality-controlled international student mobility. RWTH would like to initiate further Master’s DD programs (possibly also Bachelor’s DD programs) and extend the following portfolio by 2025:

Each faculty should offer at least one DD program.
DD program agreements should preferably be established with RWTH’s strategic/premium partners.
RWTH strives to foster diversity and flexibility when developing its DD programs but also to ensure coherence in criteria and quality standards, in order to be able to establish legally sound and demanding DD programs. The programs must be designed so they are clearly distinguishable from a regular exchange program with a partner university.
This handbook has been prepared in consultation with departments 1.0 and 6.0. We are all striving to facilitate the planning and implementation of DD programs. This handbook should be considered a work in progress, as we are continuously improving the processes in consultation with you, who carefully design these appealing programs.

Suggestions and requests for changes are always welcome, because this topic also requires the participation of and coordination with many different stakeholders. We look forward to your feedback.

Dr. Henriette Finsterbusch
Head of Department
International Office
1 Clarification of Terms: What Is a Dual Degree Program or Double Degree Program at RWTH?

RWTH defines „double degree programs“ as corresponding to a „joint degree program“ integrated into the curriculum of an existing RWTH degree program. Students will be enrolled at both partner universities. Recognition of certain credits acquired at the partner university for the other degree program is guaranteed in the DD program agreement. In a DD program, each of the two universities awards a separate degree and certificate.

At RWTH, participation in DD programs is not listed separately as an addition to the transcript. However, it is possible to include a sentence for recognition that states it is a DD program. The faculty must coordinate this with the ZPA in each case and it will look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Module</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognized based on the student’s performance in the degree program at Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) as part of the T.I.M.E Double Degree Program.</td>
<td>4,00</td>
<td>passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robotics and Autonomous Systems</td>
<td>4,00</td>
<td>passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized based on the student’s performance in the degree program at Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) within the framework of the T.I.M.E Double Degree Program.</td>
<td>6,00</td>
<td>excellent (1,0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial Intelligence</td>
<td>6,00</td>
<td>excellent (1,0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized based on the student’s performance in the degree program at Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) within the framework of the T.I.M.E Double Degree Program.</td>
<td>4,00</td>
<td>excellent (1,0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, faculties 4 and 6 issue a certificate in German and English to their outgoing and incoming students confirming their successful participation in the DD program. If interested, (Claudia Hanke) can send you the template for this.

In contrast, a „joint degree“ corresponds to a course of study with a jointly developed and coordinated curriculum, a degree program proportion at the foreign university of at least 25%, joint accreditation, and a coordinated admission and exam system, with a single degree awarded at the end.

The guiding principle for DD programs is: two academic degrees may not be awarded for ONE academic performance, i.e. the credits must justify the acquisition of two university degrees. Joint accreditation with the partner university is not required to establish a DD program. It should be noted, however, that as part of the quality assurance process for the RWTH degree program, the DD program is recognizably taken into account. A corresponding process is planned for the re-accreditation due in 2024.

International Degree Program = Joint Degree

Curriculum is developed with partner degree program to be accredited

One jointly awarded degree

RWTH Degree Program Combined With Partner University’s Degree Program = Double Degree Program

An already accredited RWTH degree program combined with an already accredited degree program of the partner university

Two separately awarded degrees
2 RWTH’s Criteria for Dual Degree Programs/Double Degree Programs

Over the years, RWTH has developed and revised its criteria for DD programs, most recently adopted in a Rectorate resolution from February 2, 2021.

The Rectorate decided that DD agreements/programs with international universities are permitted under the following conditions:

The program intends to combine two degree programs accredited in the respective home country, i.e. it is explicitly not a joint degree program and results in two separate degrees being awarded (not the joint awarding of a degree).

The following principle applies: two degrees may not be awarded for one academic performance, rather the student must indicate a recognizable additional academic performance, i.e. the number of credit points to be earned must be demonstrably higher than would be required if only one degree were to be attained.

A student is considered to have attained an additional performance when they meet all three of the following minimum requirements:

1. One additional semester, i.e. one semester more than the standard period of study for the Master’s degree program
2. 30 credit points more than those set out in the regular curriculum of the Master’s degree program, some of which may be earned in virtual or blended formats
3. Studying at the partner university for one semester

The respective faculty also convincingly demonstrates the recognizable qualitative added value of the DD agreement/program.

Applications for establishing DD agreement/programs are submitted via an application form with the help of a checklist (both included at the end of this handbook).

The faculty submits this application to the Rectorate Commission for Quality Management in Teaching and Learning (RKL) for review and a final decision.
If a faculty plans a DD agreement/program that deviates from the above minimum requirements (1 to 3) for good cause, this must be plausibly justified and then reviewed and finally approved by the RKL.

3 Ideal Process and Application for a Double Degree Program

The following is an ideal outline of the steps involved in implementing a DD program.

- Antrag an das International Office, Abt. 2.4 senden
- nach Vorprüfung des Antrags durch Abteilung 2.4 erfolgt Weiterleitung an die Rektoratskommission für Qualitätsmanagement in der Lehre (RKL, Abt. 6.2) zur Entscheidung
- Kontaktannahme mit dem International Office
- Verhandlung mit einer potenziellen Partnerhochschule
- Verhandlung des Double Degree Programms unter Zuhilfenahme der Checkliste
- bei positiver Entscheidung Abschluss eines Double Degree Abkommens
- Beginn der Mobilität
Since DD programs are a complex mobility format, we suggest you allow at least one year for preparation.

Once the faculty has successfully completed negotiating the DD program with the partner university and planning is complete, please submit an application (the form can be found at the end of this handbook) for approval of the DD program and forward it to International Office, Division 2.4. There, the application – which is ideally already known in advance – will be reviewed and then forwarded to Division 6.2, which includes the application as an agenda item for an RKL meeting. Division 6.2 will inform the applicants about the meeting date and invite them. At the meeting, you will have the opportunity to present your proposed DD program and respond to (any) questions from the commission members. Usually, a decision on your application will be made during the meeting.

Please address the following points in both your application and presentation:

- Reasons for choosing the partner university (reputation, ranking, profile, accreditation)
- Added value of the DD program (for students and the faculty/RWTH)
- Students’ additional performance curriculum overview for outgoing and incoming students
- Planned numbers of exchanges and planned start date of student exchanges
4 Visibility and the Anchoring of Double Degree Programs in Line With Exam Law

DD programs cannot be included in the examination regulations of an existing degree program if the standard period of study and the total CP required to complete the DD program differ from the existing degree program. Additional credits to be completed that are not included in the total CP should be documented in the diploma supplement.

Currently, the following options are available to increase the visibility of DD agreements and ensure they comply with exam law:

1. When entering into a DD agreement, the respective curricula for incoming and outgoing students will be included in the appendix to the agreement.

   Consequence: No consideration in the examination regulations, little visibility (within and without the University), no special regulations for BAföG recipients.

2. The DD program is included as a specialization in the examination regulations.

   Consequence: The specifications of the existing degree program must be maintained; in particular, the standard period of study may not be amended, but the curricula of the DD program can be included in the appendix of the examination regulations within the framework of a new specialization (here generally no inclusion of the additional performance within the framework of the curriculum possible, only a reference to the possibly required additional performance for acquiring the degree is conceivable); little visibility of the DD program but integration into the examination regulations via the curriculum.

3. For a specific DD program, the faculty establishes its own degree program that undergoes internal university accreditation.

   Consequence: The standard period of study can be regulated according to the DD program and thus BAföG funding can also be regulated. The curriculum can be individually tailored according to the requirements of the DD program (incl. the additional performance); high visibility and thus suitable as a recruitment tool for international students.
5 Contractual Agreements for Double Degree Programs

We recommend the DD program be agreed in a contract with the partner university. Upon request, the International Office (Claudia Hanke) will be happy to provide you with a sample contract, which was developed together with departments 9.0 and 1.0. Should your partner university wish to make changes to this sample contract, these can, of course, be taken into account. However, departments 9.0 and 1.0 must then review the contract anew to ensure legal compliance.

6 Overview of Current Double Degree Programs at RWTH

It may be helpful to take a look at the existing DD programs at RWTH to get ideas for how to design your own program, or to discuss ideas with colleagues who already have experience in this area.

Upon request, we will be happy to provide you with an overview of all DD programs currently offered at RWTH, including the structure of each program and the additional performance required of students. Please contact Claudia Hanke regarding this matter.
Organizational Aspects of Student Mobility (Incoming and Outgoing Students)
7.1 Application Process for Students to Participate in Double Degree Programs

7.1.1 For Incoming Students

This is useful webpage for those applying as incoming students to DD programs: Application info.

7.1.2 For Outgoing Students

RWTH students who would like to apply for a DD program (outgoing student) can go to this webpage.
7.2 Students Who Receive BAföG Funding

One criterion of the DD program is the students’ additional performance, which usually means the standard period of study must be extended by at least one semester. Students who receive BAföG funding suffer a financial disadvantage as the standard period of study is systematically exceeded. The individual BAföG funding period is based on the standard period of study of the degree program, i.e. participation in a DD program is not taken into account.

In response to the Vice-Rector for International Affairs’ request for a proposed solution, the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia confirmed that for the „[…] specific case group of degree programs that are combined with each other but are independent in themselves“, it sees no option „to influence the funding period by changing the standard period of study in the sense desired by RWTH.“ (March 17, 2021)
7.3 Enrollment During the Double Degree Program

Students – both incoming and outgoing – in DD programs must be enrolled at RWTH Aachen University throughout their studies. It is not (currently) possible to easily identify these students in RWTHonline via a certain classification.

For semesters completed at RWTH, the regular semester contribution fee is due and the health insurance obligation is effective as in-person attendance is required. For the semesters spent at the partner university, only a reduced semester contribution fee is due (reduced by the price of the Semester Ticket and social contribution fee) and students must prove that they are exempt from compulsory health insurance (unless they would like to keep their German health insurance).

Double degree incoming students can also apply for semesters of leave at RWTH when they return to their home university, but the above solution is financially more favorable for these students, since the social contribution fee and Semester Ticket fee are not due.

Division 2.1 enters the corresponding fee exemptions for semesters spent at the partner university in RWTHonline and keeps track of the curricula there. The respective program coordinators at International Office inform the students about the necessary steps to prove they have health insurance or are exempt from the health insurance obligation throughout their stay abroad.

Incoming students in DD programs are enrolled as „degree seeking students“, i.e. they have a different status than incoming students from exchange programs where, as a rule, no academic degree will be obtained at RWTH (e.g. Erasmus incoming students). Incoming students in DD programs are thus also considered regularly enrolled international students.
7.4 Participation in Language Courses at the Language Center

7.4.1 For Incoming Students

Incoming students in DD programs can currently attend the following German courses at the Language Center (SZ) free of charge:

Students who begin their studies at RWTH in the winter semester:

1. Free participation in the preliminary course „Deutsch International“ = 4 SWS
2. Free participation in the course in the initial winter semester = 4 SWS

Students who begin their studies at RWTH in the summer semester:
Free participation in a semester-long German course = up to 8 SWS
Prerequisite: Incoming students can prove they have B1 level at the start of the language course

Beyond this free offer at the specific times stated, incoming students are not entitled to further German courses at no cost.

Please inform Division 2.2 of any incoming students in DD programs so the team can report this to the Language Center and the students can then be considered for language courses.

In addition, participating in German courses is a compulsory part of the curriculum for international students at certain faculties. As incoming students in DD programs are also considered international students, such courses are automatically free.
7.4.2  For Outgoing Students

Outgoing students in DD programs, i.e. RWTH students you have selected, will be given preference when participating in courses at the Language Center, like students in other exchange programs. This is to ensure that students can adequately prepare for the language spoken in the country of the partner university.

The Language Center provides an Excel list for registering double degree students, in which you can enter all double degree students and send it by email by the end of the semester (March 15 or September 15) to info@sz.rwth-aachen.de.

Students reported in this way are given the right to book a maximum of 4 SWS (one course of 4 SWS, or 2 courses of 2 SWS each) in the chosen language. It only applies for the language of the respective country or the language of instruction there and only if this not English. The booking right does not entitle students to register for additional language courses, nor does it guarantee a course place. The booking right is tied to a specific language, meaning that each student can only select and submit their registration for one of the languages explained above.

Please refer to the information on the Language Center’s [webseite](#).
7.5 Living in Aachen (Incoming Students)

The Housing Advice Service at the International Office is happy to assist all participants in DD programs, offering them advice on finding accommodation. The Housing Advice Service provides information on and assistance with applying for student dorm rooms for program students, provides detailed material on finding accommodation in the private housing market, and serves as an interface and contact, communicating available listings from private providers. We recommend you contact us early on by sending an email to housing@rwth-aachen.de or by coming to our virtual office hours, which are held twice a week. Further information is available at www.rwth-aachen.de/housing.

7.6 International Office Services for Incoming Students in Double Degree Programs

The consulting and support services for incoming students in DD programs are listed here.
Checklist

This checklist should help you consider all the important aspects when planning a DD program. Please involve the International Office at the earliest possible stage when designing your DD program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question(s)</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the reasons for choosing the partner university?</strong></td>
<td>Suitability in terms of the subject, excellence in the respective field, international reputation, quality of student support, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No justification is required for members of the IDEA League, the T.I.M.E. Association, and the University’s strategic partnerships (Tsinghua University of Beijing, IIT Madras, the University of Alberta)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was or is there already a cooperation with the partner university and if so, what have prior experiences been like?</strong></td>
<td>e.g. Erasmus cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the faculty’s objective with the DD program?</strong></td>
<td>Recruiting international students, in the medium term recruiting particularly qualified doctoral candidates; staying competitive, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional performance</strong></td>
<td>The minimum requirements are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the DD program meet the three minimum requirements (according to the Rectorate’s resolution from February 2, 2021)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· One semester more than the standard period of study for the degree program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· 30 credit points more than set out in the regular curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· Studying at the partner university for one semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question(s)</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not all or none of these minimum requirements are met, how can an</td>
<td>The principle applies: two degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additional performance be justified?</td>
<td>cannot be awarded for one academic achievement,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i.e. recognizable additional performance required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Added Value**

What added value does the program offer students?

Besides earning a dual degree, of course

Is the DD program based on similarities/the same components or does it complement the partner university’s course offerings?

**Structure**

What is the target number of students?
Number of incoming and outgoing students per academic year

What is the semester structure? Are there any variants to this?

Example:
Variant A:
Master’s semesters 1 and 5 at RWTH
Master’s semesters 2, 3, and 4 in person at the partner university

Variant B:
Master’s semesters 1, 2, and 3 at the partner university
Master’s semesters 4 and 5 at RWTH

Outgoing Students
Which in-person/virtual semesters do the outgoing students spend at the partner university and which in-person/virtual semesters do they spend at RWTH?

Incoming Students
Which in-person/virtual semesters do the incoming students spend at their home university and which in-person/virtual semesters do they spend at RWTH?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question(s)</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does the additional performance of the outgoing students look like in terms of additional semesters and additional credit points (in relation to the standard period of study)?</td>
<td>Example: 6 semesters (regularly 4 semesters): + 2 semesters in the DD program 180 credits (regularly 120 credits) + 60 credits in the DD program 3 semesters in person at the partner university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the contractual foundation for mutual recognition?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are scholarships for outgoing students available during their stay at the partner university? If so, what funding specifically?</td>
<td>f.e. DAAD, Erasmus (maximal 2 Semester funding possible), FGU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are third-party funding applications planned (DAAD EU, FGU etc.?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a reciprocal tuition waiver been agreed?</td>
<td>The contract template for DD programs explicitly allows for reciprocal tuition waivers. This issue should be addressed in negotiations with the partner university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any other costs for the faculty/department? If so, what costs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is primarily responsible for the DD program in the faculty/department?</td>
<td>This individual should be named in the DD contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the DD program promoted?</td>
<td>Via the website, at the University orientation session, online seminars, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question(s)</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the DD program communicated within the faculty?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will applicants be selected?</td>
<td>Will there be a joint selection process with the partner university? \ Is there an interview with applicants and representatives of the partner university?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the selection criteria? Are the selection criteria clear and logical for students?</td>
<td>If applicable, GPA, language proficiency, letter of motivation, extracurricular involvement, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the application process regulated?: Application process Application deadlines Forms/online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is language course participation (courses in the national language) planned/a condition/an option?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it free for them to participate in language courses? If not, what costs will students incur?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For outgoing students at the partner university For incoming students at RWTH (SZ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the following aspects been clarified?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Grade conversion · Grading procedure · Thesis supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is support for (outgoing and incoming) students ensured in the faculty?</td>
<td>Professional counselling, advice and help in difficult situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragestellung</td>
<td>Erläuterung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are students prepared for the DD program?</td>
<td>Own website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-person advising by appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viewing testimonials from former DD students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation program at partner university available (comparable to Welcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week at RWTH)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is student accommodation provided?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For outgoing students at the partner university</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For incoming students at RWTH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>