Guidance for Occupational Language Training
as per §45a Aufenthaltsgesetz (German Residence Act)

The objective of occupational language courses is the fast and sustained integration in the vocational training or labour market.

In principle, you can attend an occupational language course if you:

- are a foreign national living in Germany OR
- are a citizen of the European Union OR
- are a German national with migration background and have insufficient knowledge of German to be integrated in the vocational training or labour market.

What are occupational language courses?

The occupational language courses teach German in the context of occupations. The occupational language courses are available as basic occupational language courses and special occupational language courses.

- Basic occupational language courses and special occupational language courses
  These courses comprise 400 to 500 lessons of 45 minutes each. These types of courses can target the language levels A2, B1, B2 or C1. The occupational language courses focus on achieving job-related German language proficiency to a certain targeted language level in a general occupational context. You will be learning German with occupational elements. Above all, in addition to grammar, you will learn the vocabulary you will need in the job in order to communicate with colleagues and superiors and to contact customers.

- Special occupational language courses: Subject-specific lessons / Recognition process
  These specialised courses teach job-related German in the context of specific professions and occupational groups. You will in these special courses learn specific terminology and the grammar you will need for your type of occupation. These courses focus on the technical content and language skills you will need for your job.

Attendance qualification for occupational language courses

- Attendance qualification issued by Employment Agencies (Arbeitsagenturen – AA) and Jobcenters (JC)
  You can qualify for the occupational language courses if you are:
  - registered as seeking vocational training or
  - registered as seeking employment or
  - registered as unemployed or
  - attending a vocational or advanced training course with the Employment Agency/Jobcenter or
  - in receipt of benefits as per Book II of the Social Code (SGB II).

The responsible Employment Agency or Jobcenter will qualify you for attending an occupational language course.

This qualification takes the form of either an entitlement or an obligation. With the entitlement/obligation you will receive a list of occupational language courses that are soon to begin close to where you live (so-called KURSNET printout). You can register with a course provider of your choice.
When the Jobcenter issues the attendance qualification, you will usually also be placed under obligation to attend by way of an integration agreement.

- **Attendance qualification issued by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)**
  You can apply with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) for an attendance qualification if you are not registered as seeking vocational training or employment, not registered as unemployed and not in receipt of benefits as per Book II of the Social Code (SGB II) and
  - you are in employment OR
  - you are currently completing a vocational training course OR
  - you need a certain language level for the recognition of your foreign professional qualification or for the issuance of a professional permit OR
  - you are a parent/carer with permission to remain as per § 45a (2) Sentence 3 No. 2 AufenthG (Residence Act) in conjunction with § 11 (4) Sentence 2 and 3 SGB XII (Social Code XII).
  You will receive an attendance qualification in writing. At the same time, you will also receive a list of course providers who soon will be offering a suitable occupational language course close to where you live (KURSNET printout). You can register with a course provider of your choice using the attendance qualification.

- **Validity of the attendance qualification**
  Your attendance qualification for an occupational language course is valid for a maximum of 3 months. You must register for an occupational language course with a course provider within this fixed time limit. Therefore, please register as soon as possible and hand in your original attendance qualification (no copies) to the course provider. The time limit for registering may be shorter if you have been placed under obligation to attend the course. The time limit in which you must register with a course provider is given on the attendance obligation.

**At the course provider**

The course provider must tell you the prospective starting date of an occupational language course. The occupational language course should start within 4 weeks following your registration. If no occupational language course comes about within this time frame, you will be referred to a different course provider. In this case, the course provider must give you back your original attendance qualification. Give this attendance qualification to the new course provider.

Please always ensure that the course provider and the Federal Office can contact you. Please notify your course provider immediately if you move.

**Regular course attendance**

You need to properly attend the occupational language course in order to attain the course objective. This means that you regularly attend the lessons and sit the certification examination. Changing to a different course provider during an ongoing course is strictly not possible. The course provider must report absences to the Employment Agency or the Jobcenter. Should you fall ill, you must provide a doctor’s note from the second day of absence.

**Contribution to costs**

Attendance of an occupational language course is basically free of charge.

If you are in employment and your annual taxable income is in excess of € 20,000 (single persons) or € 40,000 (married couples), you must pay the course provider a contribution to costs to the amount of € 2.07 per lesson. This contribution to costs is payable prior to commencement of an occupational language course. The contribution to costs for lessons you missed cannot be refunded.
If you are in employment but did not need to pay a contribution to costs prior to commencement of the course and you drop out of the course, you must pay the contribution to costs for all lessons. The course remains free of charge only if you drop out for reasons you are not responsible for.

**Reimbursement of the contribution to costs**

Upon request, the BAMF will reimburse you 50 per cent of the paid contribution to costs if you provide evidence of having passed the certification examination within two years after issuance of the attendance qualification.

**Travel expenses**

Where required and subject to request, you will be granted a lump sum grant in aid to travel expenses if you are in receipt of
- unemployment benefit I (Arbeitslosengeld I, SGB III - Social Code III) or
- unemployment benefit II (Arbeitslosengeld II, SGB II - Social Code II) or
- social security benefits (Sozialhilfe, SGB XII - Social Code XII) or
- youth aid (Jugendhilfe, SGB VIII - Social Code VIII, instead of benefits as per the Asylum Seeker Benefits Act) or
- benefits as per the Asylum Seeker Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz - AsylbLG) or
- vocational training benefits (Berufsausbildungsbeihilfe) as per § 56 SGB III (Social Code III).

This is always on condition that the course location is at least 3km from your place of residence (shortest route on foot).

You can apply to the Federal Office for contribution to travel expenses through your course provider as soon as you know when you will start the occupational language course.

**Childcare**

Please contact the course provider if you need help in organising childcare.

**Attending the final test**

All occupational language courses, except for the occupational language courses for individual occupational groups, finish with a final test, the so-called certification examination. Should you fail the certification examination, you have one more opportunity to sit the test. Attendance of the certification examination (including the one-time retry) is free of charge.

**Repeating an occupational language course**

You can repeat the occupational language course once if you have failed to prove enough knowledge of German in the final test and you are not expected to pass the final test without repeating the course. For the one-time repetition of an occupational language course, you need to submit an informal application and receive a new attendance qualification from the JC/AA/BAMF.

**Additional information**

All application forms mentioned in this guidance are available from the course provider, your Employment Agency, Jobcenter or on the www.bamf.de website. Please contact your course provider for any further information.