



Hearing Aid Professional

A profession with great potential

Information on the Vocational Training



Federal Guild of
Hearing Aid Professionals



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Preface

Dear Students,

You are about to finish school or have just graduated and are ready to start your professional life? Maybe you have not yet figured out, whether to take up studies at a university or rather an apprenticeship? I would like to guide you through this decision making process.

My name is Marianne Frickel. I am a hearing aid professional. As a Master Crafts-woman in this skilled trade and self-employed entrepreneur, I manage several hearing acoustic businesses in Germany. Moreover, I am active as President of the Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals (biha), and committed to promoting a high-performance profession with good future prospects.

I am delighted that you are taking an interest in learning more about one of the most interesting and diverse health trades.

The profession combines craftsmanship with medical, scientific, psychological, communicative and electronic skills. Once you have successfully completed the dual, 3-year vocational training programme, you will be able to fit a hearing-impaired person with the latest hearing systems, tailor-made to individual hearing loss. With this service, you will contribute to considerably improving the patient's quality of life. I can promise you this much, this is a very fulfilling experience.

Moreover, there are a number of opportunities for career advancement. With a special training as paediatric acoustician, you can focus on fitting children with hearing systems.

Continue your education in the field of tinnitus care or run your own business as Master Craftsman/woman and train young people yourself. Another option, once you have passed the journeyman exam, is the Bachelor course of study "Hearing Acoustics" and the Master course of study "Hearing Acoustics and Audiological Technology".

The trade of a hearing aid professional offers diverse development opportunities and perspectives. Once you have learned this profession in Germany, you also have the chance to work abroad. Since hearing impaired people all over the world need the best possible care for good hearing.

This brochure provides you with all the information on the vocational training to become a hearing aid professional. An internship with one of the 15,000 hearing aid professionals in Germany may also help you with your decision.

You will find further information online at **www.biha.de**, **www.afh-luebeck.de** or **www.lbs-hoerakustik.de**.

We look forward to getting to know you.



Yours, Marianne Frickel





Done with school – what now?

You have just graduated from secondary school and are wondering, which job might be the right one for you? This brochure presents a unique profession and may be of help.

When thinking about your professional career, you may have asked yourself the following questions: Do I want to learn a versatile profession with various tasks? Are job security and good future prospects important for me? What are the possibilities for professional advancement? Does the job offer good opportunities for training and continued education? If so, the career of hearing aid professional might be just what you are looking for.

These days, there are many different ways of professional training. One option is the so-called dual vocational training; “dual” describes the combination of theoretical and practical training during the 3-year apprenticeship. If you choose this path, you will do part of your apprenticeship in a business and go to vocational school. This combination of theory and practice is becoming increasingly popular. Not only do you start to earn money right away, but you will find that practical skills matter just as much as theoretical knowledge, when looking for a job.

Germany, Austria, Belgium and the German-speaking part of Switzerland offer this qualified system of dual professional training, which attracts increasingly positive attention internationally, because it helps to fight youth

unemployment. While in some EU countries 30, 40 or even up to 50% of young adults cannot find a workplace, the quota in Germany is only at 5%,

For this reason, a growing number of school graduates with a degree corresponding to university entrance level, choose to learn a solid profession. To many, the idea of being in school for 12 or 13 years, and another three, four or even five years of university studies, only to end up with uncertain job prospects, does not seem very appealing.

With the following brochure, we want to present to you one of the most interesting professions around. The profession was officially established over 50 years ago. Today, more than 15,000 hearing aid professionals work in this unique trade. They are usually in it for life and continuously grow and develop further. A high level of job satisfaction and a feeling of fulfillment are typical for this profession. Anybody who works in this field, be it in a hearing acoustics business or the hearing-aid industry, does not only become part of a strong and reliable industry, but also of a big family, and finds a professional "home".

The profession of a hearing aid professional is characterized by its high level of qualification. This is ensured by a high quality, cutting-edge apprenticeship. This profession is relevant for society, indispensable and profoundly human and enjoys an excellent reputation. Finally, yet importantly, job security is basically guaranteed.





An alternative to studies at a university

Learning a skilled trade, such as the profession of a hearing aid professional, is indeed a real alternative to university studies. Moreover, there is basically no unemployment in this line of work, as for the last years, there were always more vacancies for journeymen/women and Master Craftsmen/women on the labour market than were available.

The craft of a hearing aid professional is considered a health craft, although it does not much have in common with what you usually have in mind, when thinking of the word "craft". The requirements in the apprenticeship to become a hearing aid professional are very demanding. This should not deter you though! At the National Vocational School for Hearing Aid Professionals in Luebeck, teachers know that quite often students with interme-

diate-level education are particularly motivated and committed, once they have decided for this profession. They realize soon that this unique line of work is very versatile and helps other people. Theoretical knowledge matters as much as practical skills, social competence and creativity, when it comes to finding the optimal, individual solution to improve the hearing of your future customers.

As an apprentice, you play an important role in your training business and will be treated as a full team member. In a way, you will have entered the grown-up world. You earn your own money and pay social contributions. This is a very satisfying feeling and will give you self-confidence. In this respect, apprentices may feel a little superior to university students. Another positive aspect is the recognition you will get from the customers. Having a hearing impairment, means to be disconnected from the world. You can help them and once they are able to hear again, they will be very grateful. You will experience soon enough, how much joy you can give to a person, who, for the first time in many years, is able to hear and understand everything.

The human factor is extremely important during the process of fitting hearing systems. Hearing aid professionals do not just sell hearing aids; they fit complete systems according to the individual hearing loss of their customers. Each hearing loss is different and unique, like a fingerprint. Therefore, this line of work involves a lot of responsibility and is incredibly satisfying.

Hearing aid professionals also cooperate with ENT specialists in practices and clinics, rehabilitation centres, schools for the hearing impaired and senior citizen homes, sometimes also with speech therapists, phoniatrists, social workers and paediatric audiologists when working with children. Hearing aid professionals also take care of hearing impaired people, who had a hearing system implanted, such as middle ear and inner ear implants as well as bone anchored hearing systems. For babies, implants are sometimes necessary and possible within their first year of life. It is a very diverse profession, which overlaps with many other fields of expertise. This is, what makes it interesting and challenging. Hearing aid professionals have a responsibility towards their customers, since they work directly in and on their ears in order to preserve or restore their hearing. For this reason, this profession is considered a “hazardous” health trade. It is understood, that without the necessary professional qualification, you may not fit a hearing-system. After all, it is about quality assurance and the patient’s safety.



Your application – an important first step into a new life

How do you get an apprenticeship in the profession of hearing aid professional? You have already taken the first step; otherwise, you would not be holding this brochure in your hands. What to do next? How to apply for an apprenticeship position?

You may have already gone to a hearing acoustics business to inquire about an apprenticeship. Or maybe, a job counsellor at the employment agency has made you aware of this profession? Or you have read about it

in the papers or heard something on TV, one of your relatives may be wearing a hearing system and this has sparked your interest? Anyhow, you are intrigued and on the right path. An application for an apprenticeship position does not really differ from a regular job application. First you need to find out, how the business, you have selected, prefers to receive applications – online via e-mail or rather traditionally via regular mail. Remember that unless an online or e-mail application is specifically requested, the traditional application portfolio – even in our digital day

and age – still guarantees a good first impression. It shows that the applicant invested the time and made the effort to compile his/her application dossier. Your application is your business card, which you use to present yourself.

First make copies of your school report cards and put these in the application folder (which you will find in a stationery shop). Type a cover letter on a computer and print it out on good paper. It is important that you mention, why you want to learn this profession and explain, why you have chosen this exact business to apply to. Maybe it was recommended to you or you know it, because one of your family members was fitted with a hearing system there?

A picture of you is no longer required, as nobody should be hired for his/her looks, still a good picture will not do any harm. With your application letter, you have taken the first step to obtaining a qualified vocational training position. The second step will be the personal interview, to which you will surely be invited, if your potential employer liked your written application.

There is no guideline on whether an apprenticeship in a smaller or bigger company is preferable. This always depends on your personal expectations towards your employer. There are people, who feel better as part of a smaller team, others prefer bigger companies. This is a decision everyone has to make for him/herself. Of course, you are free to apply with several businesses, a smaller one, a medium-sized and a bigger one and then make up your mind during the application process.

Before signing your apprenticeship contract, you should be sure that you really want to learn this profession and that you will be able to meet the requirements. We therefore recommend reading the following pages, which will give you an impression of the vocational training programme. You can, of course, also visit a hearing aid professional in your neighbourhood and ask him/her anything you may want to know. Hearing aid professionals are always helpful and will be pleased about your interest in their profession.

If you do not know where to find one in your area, visit

www.hoerakustiker-suche.de

enter the name of your city and you will get a list of specialist businesses.



A profession with great career potential

The profession “hearing aid professional” exists for more than 50 years now. The classification as a health craft has proven itself and the combination of theory and practice in the dual system of vocational training has become an example worldwide.

When ENT specialists started to pass the fitting of hearing aids on to technically experienced retailers more and more, a new profession started to form in Germany: Hearing aid acousticians. In 1952, they established their first professional association. For quite some time it was debated, if this new profession should be considered a craft, a commercial or an academic profession. Only in 1960 a decision was reached. Based on the model of opticians, hearing aid acousticians defined themselves as health craftsmen.

In 1966 the profession was recognized by the state as independent healthcare profession. Up to 1985 Dr. Werner Pistor was responsible for the development of this unique profession, basically as the nestor of this branch. In 2016 the training regulations were reviewed and adapted to the new requirements, for example to reflect to reflect technical developments. At the same time, the professional title was changed from hearing-aid acoustician to hearing aid professional.

The German model of dual vocational training, which exists in Austria, Belgium, Luxemburg and Switzerland in a similar way, is characterized by a combination of operational practice and theoretical studies. It is becoming more and more popular. Turkey, Israel, Jordania, Romania and the People's Republic of China have used this model as

an example. During the 3-years of vocational training, you will work as an apprentice in a business, where you will receive more than 650 hours of practical and 540 hours of theoretical training. In this 3-year period, 1,440 hours of theory and another 120 hours of industry-wide professional training will be taught in block courses at the Academy of Hearing Acoustics. The apprenticeship will be completed with a journeyman/woman examination and you will receive your journeyman's certificate. As a journeyman/woman you may work as a hearing aid professional, but you are not allowed to train apprentices, open your own business or work without the supervision of a master craftsman/woman.

With the journeyman certificate as well as the advanced technical college certificate – or alternatively – the master craftsman/woman certificate, you have the option to study Hearing Acoustics at the University of Applied Sciences Luebeck and obtain – if you choose this academic career path – a Bachelor of Science and afterwards a Master degree. The National Vocational School, the Academy of Hearing Acoustics, the University of Applied Sciences and the Medical University are all located on the same site in Luebeck. They cooperate closely and form the Campus Hearing Acoustics.

If you want to continue with the craft training, the highest vocational qualification will be the Master Craftsman/woman certificate, which will require another year of professional training at the Academy of Hearing Acoustics with 1,010 hours of theory and 550 hours of practice and a Master Craftsman/woman examination. With this certificate, you will be entitled to take on apprentices, run your own business, manage a branch or work in the hearing device industry as skilled expert.

This modular system, which has been developed in Germany, allows young professionals to determine his/her professional training individually. Hearing acoustics is not a one-way street, but the path to a challenging and interesting professional career – it is up to you to decide how you want to proceed.

Distribution of hours among place of learning, theory and practice

PLACE OF LEARNING	THEORY	PRACTISE	TOTAL
Company	540	650	1.190
Vocational school	1.440	0	1.440
Academy (Industry-wide professional training)	0	120	120
Academy (Master course)	1.010	550	1.560
Total	2.990	1.320	4.310



Record numbers in vocational training

The profession of hearing aid professional is becoming increasingly popular. More than 2,000 guests join to celebrate the largest ceremony in honour of the new journeymen/women in Germany every year.

With a training quota of 20 percent, the hearing acoustic trade holds a record in the German industry (number of apprentices in relation to the total number of employees). Few other crafts boast similar quotas. Currently there are 3,200 apprentices. Over 1,000 apprentices start their career as hearing aid professionals every year.

Biha President Marianne Frickel comments on these record numbers: "We feel commit-

ted to the national job training agreement. At the same time, the vocational training campus in Luebeck is really turning into an example for a modern, dual apprenticeship model in a craft."

The Academy of Hearing Acoustics and the National Vocational School constitute the biggest centre for training and further education in a health trade worldwide. The Academy and the National Vocational School are the first professional Hearing Acoustics Academy, which is recognized Europe-wide. They meet all the educational standards outlined in the Hearing Acoustics Service standards. The vocational training, here in Schleswig-Holstein, enjoys an excellent reputation worldwide and their graduates are sought-after even internationally. The Academy organizes "Train the Trainer" courses for participants from many different countries.

The concept of learning venue co-operation and the focus on Luebeck, enables the campus to quickly respond to new developments and adapt the vocational training accordingly. The hearing-aid industry with its extremely short innovation cycles operates on the highest technical level.

The profession of hearing aid professionals produces further record numbers. With a quota of 50 percent, it has the most univer-

sity access-level students of any health trade. Surveys show that a growing number of students decide for this health craft rather than taking up medical studies. "Especially performance-oriented young people want to know, which chances and opportunities a specific career path offers. We have to show them training and career options, which represent a real alternative to a university course of study. The hearing aid professionals demonstrate in an exemplary way, that an apprenticeship can indeed compete with academic education offers.", stated Holger Schwannecke, Secretary General of the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH).

Every year about 1,000 apprentices start their dual 3-year vocational training to become a hearing aid professional in Germany. During this period, they do not only acquire medical and technical skills and knowledge, but also social and methodical competencies. Their career prospects are excellent; once they have completed their vocational training, they are in high demand.

"The health craft hearing acoustic is a progressive, future-oriented line of work", says biha President Marianne Frickel.



Occupational image of a hearing aid professional

There are few professions, which embrace such a wide scope of competencies and fields of activities. The individual fitting of the various hearing systems does not only require practical skills, but also medical and audiological-technical knowledge, as well as a sound commercial basis and a high degree of human and social competence.

There is a clear line between the profession “hearing aid professional” and ENT specialist, although they work closely together. ENT specialists are responsible for the diagnosis of a hearing impairment and for the prescription and post-control of the supplied hearing system, but they are not entitled to perform the actual fitting process, since hearing acoustics is a commercial profession and as such not in line with their professional

code. The fitting of a hearing system is thus not part of the ENTs' special training. Only hearing aid professionals have the necessary skills, which are all regulated in the vocational training ordinance of our profession.

The vocational training of a hearing aid professional is divided up in skills and knowledge, which define the occupational profile of this profession, such as:

- Determining and assessing individual hearing profiles
- Preparing and evaluating of an occupational-specific audiological otoscopic diagnosis
- Counselling of patients with regards to possible hearing systems, assistive listening devices, special care and accessories, while taking into consideration individual hearing expectations
- Preparing 3-dimensional depictions of the outer ear
- Manufacturing of ear moulds, so called otoplastics, individual hearing protection and special otoplastics
- Adapting hearing systems and assistive listening devices to the individual hearing profile
- Taking care of patients and carrying out rehabilitation measures
- Performing service and maintenance works on hearing systems, assistive listening devices and accessories
- Organizing and handling of commercial and accounting processes of a hearing acoustics business



Hearing aid professionals also offer competent guidance to patients and customers in the field of tinnitus care, implantable hearing systems and pediatric audiology. The diverse, qualified tasks require relevant professional skills, e.g.:

- scientific knowledge in the fields: applied acoustics respectively psycho-acoustics, i.e. the impact of acoustic noises on the audio perception, or
- technical skills, for example, when asked: “How do these little hearing computers with their digital signal processing lead to a better speech comprehension?”,
- medical expertise regarding anatomical, physiological and pathological questions around hearing and also,
- psycho-social skills in view of dealing with hearing impaired people during psycho-acoustic measurements and during the process of getting used to a hearing aid.

Moreover, the vocational training to become a hearing aid professional includes skills and expertise, which are taught with reference to the occupational context:

- Vocational training, labour and collective bargaining law,
- structure and organisation of the training company,
- work-related health and safety protection
- business-related and technical communication as well as protection of patient data
- planning and organizing of work processes and
- implementation of quality assurance measures

The following graphic shows the necessary professional competencies and underlines at the same time the diversity of the required skills.







How much do I earn? Who covers the costs?

There are no study fees for the vocational training to become a hearing aid professional. Quite the contrary, you will receive a monthly training allowance from the first year of your apprenticeship onwards. Your employer and the federal states cover a share of the costs, which

arise during the vocational training period.

As a hearing aid professional apprentice you will receive a monthly training allowance of around EUR 650 gross in the first year, in the second EUR 750 gross per month and in the

third year EUR 850. Your employer will also pay their share of the social security contributions. Some employers pay less, others pay more. This depends on the “supply and demand” ratio on the apprenticeship market, if an applicant comes with previous knowledge and the impression they left during the interview. Due to the relatively low-income level, apprentices usually do not have to pay any taxes.

During the three-year apprenticeship programme, you will have to come to Luebeck eight times for a four-week period each to attend classes at the National Vocational School. There are no school fees, as this is covered by the state, however, these visits involve costs for board and lodging as well as travel expenses, which, in principle, have to be paid for by the students. As this would disadvantage those vocational students, who have to leave their hometowns to attend school, many federal states have agreed to pay compensation. This compensation varies in each federal state between 20 and 80 percent of the costs.

Further information for your particular federal state can be obtained at the National Vocational School in Luebeck, which also makes the relevant forms available.

Your employer will cover the costs for the industry-wide training at the Academy of Hearing Acoustics in Luebeck, which requires a one-week stay every year of your apprenticeship.

Apprentices pay no fees for the intermediate and journeyman examinations. The employer will pay for these, along with the costs for the work materials. Your employer will not always cover lodging and board on the examination days. Some do, however, this really depends on what was agreed in the apprenticeship contract.





The Campus Hearing Acoustics

The Campus Hearing Acoustics is one of a kind. The Academy of Hearing Acoustics, the National Vocational School for Hearing Aid Professionals, the German Hearing-aid institute, the University of Applied Sciences Luebeck as well as the Medical University Luebeck, are all located here on campus in the university district St. Juergen in Luebeck and work closely together. During their time in Luebeck, the apprentices also live on campus. This creates a special feeling of belonging.

You will surely enjoy this. Anyone who visited Luebeck once, always likes to return. This does not only hold true for the city of Luebeck, the beautiful beaches of Travemuende, but also for the central training location for hearing aid professionals, which is located in the "green" part of town, St. Juergen. Since its founding more than 50 years ago, more than 20,000 journeymen/women and over 5,000 master craftsmen/women were trained here. Most of them come back at some point, not only for vacations, but also to make use of the Academy's diverse advanced education offers. "Working and learning, where others spend their vacation time", is the fitting motto. Living and learning together during the training periods at the National Vocational School creates a unique sense of belonging and many long-standing friendships, even partnerships, are the result.

6 laboratories for otoplasty and computer aided design (CAD) to make 3-D depictions of ear moulds, 10 laboratories for acoustic and hearing system measuring technology, 1 classroom for IT and business studies, 1 classroom for wireless communication systems, assistive hearing devices and accessories, 52 class and project rooms with multi-media equipment, 56 measuring and fitting rooms, 3 hearing aid collections with 1,800 state-of-the art hearing systems, 1 auditorium for 120 people, 3 internet centres, 1 cafeteria and 7 boarding homes are available on campus.

And last, but not least, a hearing aid museum with a collection, which is unique worldwide: From old 18th century ear trumpets to electric hearing devices from the late 19th century and of course, also the latest hearing devices and systems from the beginning of the 20th century up until today.

So far, the Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals (biha) has invested more than 60 million Euro into these exceptional training facilities.

Apprentices from all over Germany attend the National Vocational School, which is per se the public vocational school of Schleswig-Holstein, supported by the Luebeck Chamber of Skilled Crafts. Hence, you will have the chance to meet apprentices from all corners of Germany. More than 3,000 students visit the school and are being taught in 100 classes. The number of classes per year varies between 30 and 32, this means that more than 900 students are on campus at the same time. Over 60 percent of all students are female; approximately 50 percent of all students have a university access-level qualification.

As the central education institution for hearing aid professionals, the Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals is the responsible body for the Academy, which is financed partly by its own resources and partly through public funding. As the hearing acoustics craft acknowledges the importance of a good quality professional training, hearing aid professionals and the hearing-aid manufacturers pay a certain amount to the Academy for every hearing-aid sold. The industry-wide professional training for apprentices, the Master classes (full and part time), the continued education up to studies at universities of applied sciences and regular university courses of study with international degree, research and development for the hearing aid professional craft as well as the support of hearing aid professionals in all general issues as well as on questions around further and continued education, count among the responsibility of the Academy. The Academy serves as an example for many countries.



Each year more than 3,500 participants and visitors come to the Academy and the National Vocational School. 105 full time teachers and lecturers as well as another 100 part-time lecturers from the practice look after them. The Academy and the National Vocational School see themselves as a centre of competence, which develops, collects and passes on expertise, skills and knowledge for the common goal of improving the life quality of hearing-impaired people.

The vocational training of apprentices, the continued education for journeymen/women, master craftsmen/women as well as Bachelor and Master Students is pooled here and continuously optimized for the benefit of all learners.





„It was a easy decision“

Interview with Martin Psiuk

Martin Psiuk, 24, in his first year of apprenticeship, tells us, how he first heard about the profession of a hearing aid professional, what he finds fascinating about this job and how he sees his future.

Mr. Psiuk, how did you become aware of this profession?

I am a trained commercial assistant, an apprenticeship, which I have done after I had graduated from secondary school. Afterwards I completed my Wirtschaftsabitur (university entry level business diploma), then I did two years of army service and finally one and a half years of medical engineering studies. This was definitely a step in the right direction. At a job fair, I inquired about other options in this field. At this job fair, there was also a booth of a hearing acoustics business, also medical-technology products. The hearing acoustics business offered me an internship. I thought, also because of my commercial training, that sitting in an office all day, is not what I want. I want to deal with people – as I have come to experien-

ce during my time with the Federal Army. Furthermore the technical aspect appealed to me, the handling of the devices/equipment.

And it was this combination of dealing with people, but also with technical devices, which has eventually convinced you to look for an apprenticeship as a hearing aid professional after your internship?

Yes, you can say that. The way all these aspects were involved during my internship... I could imagine very well working in this profession. Especially the way how you get to work with people in this profession, the customer service and counselling – this really won me over.

During your internship, did you actually have the opportunity to get actively involved or was it rather limited to a classic observer role?

At the beginning, I have of course watched and observed the other employees, but only a few days into my internship, I was allowed to do many things by myself, like selling batteries or explaining to customers, how to put batteries into hearing systems. I was also allowed to listen in during preliminary talks with customers, which gave me an impression of how the counselling is done. I was also given the opportunity to mill a trial ear mould, which gave me an idea of the craftsmanship involved. After all, it is not just about customer service, but also the craft.

Did it matter to you that the profession of a hearing aid professional is a health trade?

No, I wanted to stay in the field of medical technology, to which hearing acoustics belongs. I could have been something else. The medical field is complex and sometimes you don't really know everything that is part of it. What I enjoy, is that you concentrate on one thing and do it really well.

Were you offered an apprenticeship at the business, where you did your internship?

Yes, this went really well. The internship went from October to January and in February, I was able to start my apprenticeship. I was supposed to wait until the summer to begin the vocational training, but then an opportunity came up to start earlier. My boss asked me if I wanted to do that and gave me an apprenticeship contract right away.

And? Did you have to think about it for a while?

Actually, not at all. For once, because the work atmosphere there was really great and secondly, because I enjoyed the work. Moreover, I wanted to complete an apprenticeship, after all, I am already 24. Afterwards I want to gather some professional practice. I am not interested in taking up a job in the industry, which theoretically would be an option, too. I guess, I would miss the customer relations.

So the feeling of having successfully taken care of a customer is important to you?

Yes, exactly. Having the impression to have done something useful and that I was able to help someone, is very satisfying. By now, I also had the opportunity to see the expression on a customer's face, once they are able to hear again. It's a really great experience!

Originally, you are from federal state Thuringia. For the training at the National Vocational School you had to come to Luebeck? Was this something that worried you?

No, during my university studies I had lived by myself in Jena and could not drive home every day. And of course, I was already used to being away from home because of my time with the Federal Army. So this was no problem for me at all.

You are halfway through your first year of vocational training. How much responsibility have you been given in your training company?

Not much during the first year. You mill ear moulds, take moulds – not on the customer, but first on the master or other journeymen to practice how it's done. You also learn how to counsel customers on special issues. It is not only about hearing systems, but also hearing or swimming protection. I get more and more insights on what may be important during consultations and how everything works. Then there's also tasks like replenishing the stocks – these are also things, which come up during your first year of training.

In how far does what you do in your training company complement what you learn in school in Luebeck?

At school in Luebeck we have just specifically practiced preliminary talks among our class. And of course we learn the theoretical basics, so that you know what a healthy ear drum is supposed to look like so we see, when performing an otoscopy on a customer, if everything is in order. This gives me confidence when talking to customers, the fact that I can explain, why he/she hears and how. So it's a good interplay between theoretical knowledge and practical know-how acquired in the training company.

What is life like as a vocational student in Luebeck?

Actually it is a real boarding school life. We are a small class of only 15 students, personally, I like this a lot.

What are you doing in Luebeck once classes are over?

We have a wide range of sport options here, from canoe rides to basketball, football, volleyball, dance aerobic classes – basically anything you can imagine. We also do things together with our classmates. We just went carting on the weekend, not after classes. During the week, we often go over what we have learned in the classes together. This works really well.



When you meet former classmates or friends and tell them about your profession, what is their reaction? Are they familiar with this profession?

Many of them worry, when I offer to give them a hearing test. They thankfully decline and say that they still hear quite well (laughs).

Would you say that this is maybe a bit of a problem in this profession? Many people try to avoid taking a hearing test for too long and only come when it is almost too late...

Many of them only come, when it is indeed too late. Once your computer is not trained (Martin Psiuk points to his head, author's note), you quickly reach the point when it is too late and there is hardly any speech comprehension left. Sometimes customers come to us, who have carried the ENT's prescription for a hearing system around with them for half a year, just because they are scared. In these cases, it is important to address their concerns and to reassure them.

Many customers probably still think of hearing systems as these giant skin-coloured devices, you clip behind your ear. When they see how small, and with which kind of technology modern hearing systems are equipped, how do they react?

They are often surprised that you can barely see the devices on the ear, in-ear devices are almost not visible at all. It is not only older people who come to see us. We also look after many younger customers.

Do you already have plans after you have completed your apprenticeship? There are many options.

As I've said before, I would first like to get some practical experience. I don't know yet, what comes afterwards. First, I will finish my vocational training and then see what happens next.

Mr. Psiuk, Thank you for talking to us.



Where will I be accommodated? Learning and living on campus

During their vocational training, the Academy of Hearing Acoustics becomes a home away from home for apprentices from all over Germany. After all, there is more to life one campus than just studying.

During the vocational training periods at the Academy, which extend over several weeks, you will live on campus in one of the modern, well equipped rooms of our boarding homes. There will always be a contact person available to you in the afternoons or evenings.

Apart from the free wifi, there are various leisure offers for our students in the evening hours. These joint leisure activities create a feeling of togetherness, which is hard to find in other professions. The combination of learning, working, living and eating on the more than 40,000 square meter campus, creates a positive atmosphere, which makes it easy for new students to integrate into the community. Not only the Academy of Hearing Acoustics itself, but also the surrounding area could not be more attractive and offers ideal condi-

tions – also weather-wise – for learning. The Baltic Sea is right at your doorstep, the region known as “Holstein Switzerland” with its lakes and hills is not far away. Not to forget the town of Luebeck! This interesting, open Hanseatic town with its charming historic city centre, wide range of leisure activities and student flair, adds to the mix. Since Luebeck is a bike city, the school club offers free bike rental to all members. In the summer you can also rent a canoe and take tours on the waters around Luebeck.

Apart from the seven boarding homes, there is another one in the training park Blankensee. Overall, there is accommodation available for up to 1,000 students, 700 of them can stay right here on campus, mostly in double rooms, but you can also book single and triple rooms. All rooms have free wifi, telephone, flat-screen TVs as well as private bathrooms. Students can choose between full and half board.





Your initial vocational training to become a hearing aid professional

The initial vocational training of a hearing aid professional consists of the training in the company, classes at the vocational school as well as the industry-wide training. Upon successful completion of the journeyman/woman examination, you will be able to find a job anywhere in the hearing acoustic branch.

The vocational training is offered in block form at the National Vocational School for Hearing Aid Professionals in Luebeck. There is a total of eight courses, which are spread out over the three year training period. Each course extends over a four week period. Between the third and the fourth, fifth and sixth as well as the seventh and eighth block, there will be a week of industry-wide training

at the Academy of Hearing Acoustics in Luebeck. Next to the training company and the National Vocational School, the Academy is the third learning environment. The industry-wide training covers content, which goes beyond the regular training within your company. Combining the knowledge taught at the vocational school and the skills acquired in the training company, promotes the ability to deal with professional tasks independently and in a competent manner. The industry-wide training, the vocational training and the training within the company form the basis for self-regulated learning and is thus a crucial factor for the quality of the vocational training.

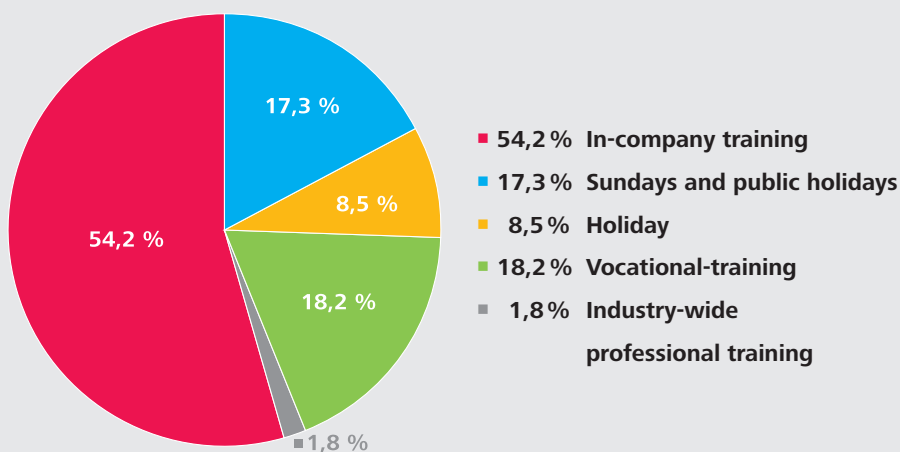
Hearing aid professionals work in a profession, which involves medical, audiological, psychological, social, technical, economic as well as ecological aspects. For this reason, certain professional tasks combine several scientific disciplines, which, in their sum, define the vocational focus. In order to reflect this diversity, 17 learning fields were formed, which are divided up over the three year training period. They can be summarized in six groups:

- **Audiological pre-consultation and counselling**
- **Audiology**
- **Otoplastic**
- **Adjustment of hearing systems**
- **Service and maintenance**
- **Business transactions and settlements specific for the hearing acoustic trade**

Moreover, there are inter-professional learning fields, such as politics and sport. During „Project and Practice Days“ students are divided up in two groups and learn to research on their own, process and present the compiled information clearly and in an understandable manner or to carry out practical exercises (e.g. determination of the reverberation time of a room, measurements of hearing systems etc.). These „Project and Practice Days“ do not only promote profession-specific objectives, but also focus on other important professional competencies.

The written journeyman/woman examination will be held after completion of the eighth course. Once you have passed your journeyman/woman examination, you are fully qualified as a hearing aid professional. The diagram illustrates how the training in the company, the vocational school classes and the industry-wide training are spread over the entire apprenticeship period.

Distribution of hours during initial training:





Further Education: Master Craftsman/woman Certificate, Bachelor and Masters Degree Programme

It is up to you to decide if you feel the journeyman/woman certificate is enough. You definitely have all the options to further pursue your professional education. 20 percent of all journeymen/women decide that they want to proceed with their education. In most cases these are the Master Craftsman/woman courses at the Academy of Hearing Acoustics.

The preparatory classes for the Master Craftsman/woman examination at the Academy are a fulltime course of study over an 11-month period. Alternatively, there is also a part-time course of study with intensive classes on weekends, block courses over a week each and online seminars. This option is of interest for those, who are unable, for private or business reasons, to spend 11 months in

Luebeck. With the part-time model, you have the option to continue working in your company, while at the same time, preparing for the Master Craftsman/woman examination. It also stretches over about a year, but requires the full concentration of the candidate on the exam preparation due to the shortened teaching units.

E-learning is a valuable support for the master craftsman/woman preparation at the Academy. Next to the actual classes candidates attend, there are virtual classrooms in order to facilitate an online exchange between classes and get in direct contact with the lecturers. Hence you have the chance to ask questions and discuss the subject matter any time. Moreover, there are online conferences and joint lessons in the relevant virtual classroom.

As an alternative to the Master Craftsman/woman examination, you can also choose an academic qualification, once you have successfully completed your journeyman/woman examination. You can join the internationally recognized Bachelor of Science

programme and afterwards the Master of Science programme. The University of Applied Sciences Luebeck, which offers the Bachelor course of study, in close cooperation with the Academy, is located on the Campus Hearing Acoustics. The Luebeck University, which offers the Master programme, is also in direct vicinity. You will find more information on these study programmes in the next chapter.

Beyond the before mentioned options, every hearing aid professional has the opportunity to attend further education and qualification classes and obtain the relevant certifications, e.g. audio therapist, specialist for implantable hearing systems, tinnitus therapist or as a paediatric acoustician, specializing in fitting children with hearing systems.



A portrait of Christina Borchert, a woman with short, layered blonde hair, looking slightly to the right with a gentle smile. She is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a metal railing and a building with large windows.

„You take on responsibility“

Interview with Christina Borchert

Christina Borchert completed the apprenticeship top of her class, now attends the Master courses in Luebeck. Find out how she first heard about the profession of hearing aid professional, what she likes about it and why she has decided to go for the Master Craftswoman Certificate.

Mrs. Borchert, You have successfully completed your apprenticeship. Do you still remember how you first learned about this profession?

After graduating from secondary school, I continued to get my vocational baccalaureate diploma and afterwards, I did an apprenticeship to become an optician. In my training company, there was also a section for hearing acoustics. This is how I learned about this profession.

What did you find so intriguing about the profession that you have decided to add a second apprenticeship after your vocational training to become an optician?

Actually, there were a number of things. Mostly the intensive contact with customers,

which I find very fascinating. Moreover, the craft aspect – the making of ear moulds for example is exciting, this is something I wanted to learn. For this reason, I decided to add a second apprenticeship right after completion of the first one. I had learned a little bit about the profession of Hearing Acoustician during my first vocational training, but I wanted to get to the bottom of it. Now I have just completed six years of professional training.

You are from Emsland (district in Lower Saxony, translator's note). Did it matter that the National Vocational School for Hearing Aid Professionals is not really located, what you would call, around the corner?

I had to drive for about an hour to get to the vocational school for opticians, too. The classes were not offered in block form though, which meant that I had to attend vocational school one day every week. Thus, to go to Luebeck during my apprenticeship as hearing aid professional was not a problem for me, but rather an advantage. Luebeck is a beautiful city, the Baltic Sea is just a stone throw away and it is also not far to go to Hamburg from there.

Do you still remember your first day as an apprentice? How did you feel going home after work?

Due to the fact that I had already learned a lot in my other training company, the first day was not really spectacular. The apprenticeships basically overlapped. However, I do remember the first time I was allowed to go into a fitting room with a customer. This door had always been closed for me, which made it all the more interesting.

How long did it take until you were given the opportunity to look after customers by yourself?

I was given this responsibility very early on, especially hearing tests, which I was allowed to perform halfway through my first year of apprenticeship.

What makes this profession attractive for you personally?

What I like about this profession is that you need a bit of everything. You need technical know-how, after all, modern hearing systems are all adapted individually to the customers' needs with computer support. Also, hearing acoustics is considered a hazardous occupation for a reason. You need to be able to handle customers well, this is really essential in this profession otherwise there is no point in going there. Also, you must of course be able to mill ear moulds, so there is quite a wide spectrum to cover. Personally, I like that a lot.

What was it like for you to attend the classes on the Campus Hearing Acoustics in Luebeck? Since you have already completed the apprenticeship as optician, you can maybe compare your experience.

My impression of the school during my apprenticeship was that everything is handled very professionally. It is very big, there are many teachers. The equipment is very good. They have everything and all the equipment is state-of-the-art, which is probably not always easy to ensure as there are constantly new developments in acoustics. Yet, at the school everything is up-to-date, so students do not have to practice measuring with old equipment. And as far as the atmosphere at the school is concerned: I always found it



very pleasant. I was in close contact with my classmates, there was a good sense of community in our class. We did a lot together after the classes, at times even the teachers joined. I am still in touch with some of my classmates. It is particularly nice because students from all over Germany come to Luebeck.

Is there anything you can tell us about the customers you deal with as a hearing aid professional? What is your clientele?

Well, you certainly do not only have to do with older people, also with younger ones, at times even children. After all, not only older people suffer from hearing disorders. It is really a wide range of people, who come into the store. And if you manage to convince them to use a hearing system and demonstrate the benefits, it is really gratifying to see how satisfied they are in the end.

The feeling of having successfully serviced a customer - is that what makes this profession special?

Absolutely, if a customer is satisfied and happy after the fitting process, which may take a couple of weeks and everything went well, that feels really good.

When you meet former classmates and tell them about your profession – do they have any idea what you are doing?

Most of them don't, but if I explain to them what I am doing, they are usually interested and start asking questions. "Tell me more", is what I hear quite often. And once I get started, there are many different things which come up. After all, I am not just sitting on a computer monotonously. There is a lot happening at my workplace and I enjoy it.

Currently you are attending the master classes in Luebeck in order to get your Master Craftswoman Certificate.

Correct, it is a year of full time studies and it was my decision to take this on. Of course this also entails a financial burden, however, there are grants, such as the Master grant or a Master loan, which help with the financing.

What are the master classes in Luebeck like? Do you still live on campus, like during the time of your apprenticeship?

No, you can look for an apartment yourself – the internet is quite helpful or talking to former Master students. As far as the actual classes are concerned – they are divided up very well. The actual content is from four different areas and they are not all taught at the same time but consecutively, making it easier to specialize in the respective field. Nonetheless, the examinations are not easy. You need to study hard and practice a lot for the practical part.

In several EU countries, a university Bachelor degree is required in order to provide care for people with hearing impairments. These countries now must recognize the German Master Craftsman/woman Certificate as equivalent qualification. Did this influence your decision to go for a Master Craftswoman title?

This was not the decisive factor for me. When I chose to attend the master classes, the Master Craftsman/woman Certificate was not yet recognized as an equivalent qualification. I have decided to pursue this, because I wanted to further qualify. As a journeywoman I noticed that really every customer is different than the next. Quite often questions came up, which I was unable to answer. In order to be able to do this in the future, I

told myself that I wanted to get a Master Certificate and continue my education. I have not really thought about university studies after the classes. For now, I just want to work. Whether or not to open my own business is also not a concern of mine right now. One step at a time. Sometime in the future, this might be an option, but not for now.

Do you have a job prospect as Master Craftswoman?

Yes and what is really nice about it: It's at a company, which offers both: hearing acoustics and optics.

Mrs. Borchert, Thank you for talking to us.



The Bachelor Course of Study Hearing Acoustics and the Master Degree Hearing Acoustics and Audiological Technology

The Bachelor course of study Hearing Acoustics is aimed at hearing aid professionals, who want to further qualify with a university degree. It is based on a cooperation between the University of Applied Sciences Luebeck and the Academy of Hearing Acoustics.

The Hearing Acoustics course of study exists since 1999 and is the first of its kind in Germany. It is a major contribution to closing the gap between the craft apprenticeship to become a hearing aid professional and the theory-oriented university training.

The course of study embraces the entire spectrum of hearing acoustics and is taking an interdisciplinary approach. Next to technical-mathematical and medical basics, it focuses on in-depth knowledge in signal processing, psycho-acoustic, audiology and hearing system technology as well as psycho-social aspects of hearing impairments.

Classes are offered mainly by the University of Applied Sciences, but also of the Academy of Hearing Acoustics as well as the Medical University. This underlines the inter-disciplinary character of this course of study and allows the joint use of the vast resources of these facilities.

A master craftsman/woman certificate or a university entry-level qualification and the journeyman/woman certificate in the hearing acoustic trade (respectively a successfully completed intermediate examination) are required to register for this course of study. If you hold a master craftsman/woman title, a university entry-level qualification (e.g. A-levels, Abitur) is not necessary. The length of study is 6 semesters. Students graduate with the international "Bachelor of Science" (B.Sc.) degree. The exam results of the University of Applied Sciences will be recognized for the master craftsman/woman examination and the European Diploma. The Bachelor degree programme starts in the winter semester only.

People, wanting to achieve a higher professional level, while taking into account their practical skills in the hearing acoustic branch and take on leadership tasks. It is this combination, which opens up new occupational fields, for instance in the hearing aid industry, in medical-audiological centres and hearing acoustic businesses.

And if you continue your studies on the Luebeck Campus Hearing for another two years, you can even graduate with a Master degree from the university. With the Master degree "Hearing Acoustics and Audiological Technology" all doors are open for an academic career, up to a professorship. Hearing Acoustics thus offers any educational policy option to all school graduates.





The Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals

Craftsmen/women, merchants and independent professions (e.g. physicians) are entitled to a self-administration of their profession.

They have to form chambers under state supervision, establish statutes, draw up binding rules for the executive of their professional activities and regulate the vocational training of young professionals. Moreover, they have the right to represent the interests of their

profession towards politics and society. The chambers are under the control of the relevant authority (ministries) and have the legal status of a public corporation.

Beyond this, crafts can establish guilds. These are voluntary, regional associations under control of the relevant chamber. The hearing aid professionals have formed a Federal Guild in 1966, which, like a chamber, has the legal status of a public corporation.

According to the statutes of the Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals, it promotes the professional interests of the members, strengthens the common spirit and the professional honour and strives to maintain good relations between master craftsmen/women, journeyman/women and apprentices. Furthermore it is charged with the following tasks:

- Regulate and supervise the vocational training and support their character development in line with the regulations of the Chamber of Crafts,
- promote the professional skills of master craftsmen/women and journeymen/women,
- participate in the administration of the vocational school in line with federal and state regulations,
- promote the cooperative system in the craft,
- provide information on issues of the hearing acoustic trade and give expert opinions,
- support the relevant trade organizations and facilities in their tasks,
- execute the legal provisions and directives issued by the Chamber of Crafts falling within their competence,
- establish facilities for their members, which are geared towards promoting skills, working methods and operational management in order to increase economic efficiency,
- support the craft press,
- implement measures to promote joint and commercial interests of its members.

The Federal Guild is also actively involved in the development, continuation and implementation of quality assurance criteria and measures in the hearing acoustics trade as well as in securing and extending the position of the hearing acoustics trade among German crafts and in the health care sector, and professional public relations activities.

The Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals was established in Mainz on 15th March, 1966 as corporation of public law. It is a representative corporation, which means that its individual members can participate through their elected delegates in the decision-making of the representative assembly, the “parliament” of the Federal Guild.

The Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals considers itself as employer and trade association, aiming at an optimal networking

of all involved parties. Among those count, next to the member companies of the hearing-aid industry, associations of concerned persons, marketing communities, employer associations, trade unions, craft chambers, ministries, The German Bundestag and the federal parliaments, cities and municipalities as well as medical specialist associations. The Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals plays an integral role not only concerning Europe’s growing together, but also in promoting the international importance of hearing acoustics based on the German model.



Europe in Comparison

Requirements	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	France	Great Britain
Qualification	High school degree	Secondary education	High school degree/equivalent	High school degree	High school degree
Entrance examination	No	No	usually	yes	No
Training place	Institution of higher education	Technical school	Company/ School/Academy	University	University
Duration of training	3 years	2,5 years	4 years	3 years	3 - 4 years
Type of degree	Bachelor Audiology	Audiology assistant	Master craftsman	State diploma	Bachelor Audiology
Duration of practise	1.600 hours	720 hours	1.320 hours	860 hours	1.500 hours
Duration of theory	600 hours	900 hours	2.750 hours	1.995 hours	1.500 hours
Costs of training	free	free	Employer/State/ Apprentice	1.740 €	free
Degree/Specialisation	No	No	Master/PhD	Master/PhD	Master/ PhD

Requirements	Italy	Poland	Sweden	Switzerland	Spain
Qualification	High school degree	High school degree	High school degree	High school degree	High school degree
Entrance examination	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Training place	University	University	University	Vocational academy	Institution of higher education
Duration of training	3 years	3 years	3 years	3 years	2 years
Type of degree	Audioprothesist	Audioprothesist	Bachelor Audiology	Hearing aid professional	Hearing aid professional
Duration of practise	3.000 hours	750 hours	5.400 hours	950 hours	2.010 hours
Duration of theory	1.500 hours	1.500 hours	600 hours	5.000 hours	500 hours
Costs of training	4.500 €	free	free	12.000 €	Staat und 5.000€ privat
Degree/Specialisation	Master degree	No	Master/ PhD	No	No

In the course of Europe growing together, an academic level was added to the German dual system of vocational training. This means, that the theoretical and the practical craft training as well as the course of study Hearing Acoustics are well coordinated and co-operate closely. Hence the school and craft qualifications of German hearing aid professionals are recognized as entry requi-

rement for the Europe-wide academic course of study Hearing Acoustics. At the same time, a professionally qualified academic degree gives immediate access to the master craftsman/woman examination, i.e. in line with the Luebeck model, the exam results of the university course of studies will be recognized in full for the theoretical part of the master craftsman/woman exam.

Facts, links, sources and picture credits

GERMANY'S HEARING ACOUSTIC BRANCH

People with a diagnosed hearing impairment	ca. 5,4 million
Fitted with a hearing system	ca. 3,7 million
Number of supplied hearing systems in 2021	1,540,000
Estimated total turnover of the branch in 2022	ca. 1,6 billion Euro
Number of businesses	ca. 2,600
Number of establishments	ca. 7,100
Employees in the Hearing Acoustic trade	ca. 15,000
Current number of apprentices (2021/2022)	ca. 3,200
Number of hearing aid manufacturers	13
Number of ENT practices	ca. 4,000
Number of ENT clinics	120 (39 university hospitals)
Demand of hearing system supply	currently covered up to approx. 2/3
Apprenticeship quota	22% (record for a craft trade)
Women quota in the hearing acoustic trade	61% (record for a craft trade)
Quota of apprentices with Abitur*	50% (record for a craft trade)

On the places of learning:

You will find all you need to know about the Academy for Hearing Acoustics at:
www.afh-luebeck.de.

Further information on the National Vocational School for Hearing Aid Professionals:
www.lbs-hoerakustik.de.

To find out more about the course of study Hearing Acoustics at the Luebeck University of Applied Sciences, check out:
www.th-luebeck.de/ha.

To find out more about the Master course "hearing acoustics and audiological technique", look at:
www.uni-luebeck.de/studium.

How to get to the Hearing Acoustic Campus?

By car you can reach the Academy for Hearing Acoustics and the National Vocational School for Hearing Aid Professionals via highway A1 or A 20. If you travel by train, go to Luebeck Hauptbahnhof (central station), change to the train direction "Bad Kleinen" and get off at the "Lübeck St. Jürgen" stop. By plane, you will arrive at the airport Lübeck-Blankensee.

Literature References

Regulation on the vocational training to become a Hearing Acoustician (HörAkAusbV) dated 28th April 2016, incl. curriculum

Texts, photos and graphics

Federal Guild of Hearing Aid Professionals (public corporation), Academy for Hearing Acoustics, National Vocational School for Hearing Aid Professionals

