FAQ: BAFöG FUNDING IN TIMES OF COVID-19

Do I lose my BAFöG funding status, § 8 I No. 3 BAFöG, if I have lost my job due to the pandemic?

The decisive factor in this question is whether the employment relationship was actually terminated or whether it is just not possible to work.

If the employment relationship continues to exist, only without any work being done, it should not have any effect on the funding. If it has actually been terminated, this does not necessarily mean that the subsidy is no longer available either. In particular, interruptions of up to a maximum of two months do not affect the subsidy. There are, however, other exceptions.

At this point, we would like to point out the many current job offers, which are especially important in the current situation. Especially in agriculture, health care and social institutions support is desperately sought:

"Jobbing in the Corona crisis", tips from the portal Studis online: https://www.studis-online.de/Jobben/jobben-in-der-corona-krise.php

New online job portal for agriculture: https://www.daslandhilft.de/

More information about jobbing during your studies: https://www.stwno.de/de/beratung/geld-im-studium/jobben

Does the postponement of the semester have an effect on the funding?

The postponement of the start of the semester has no effect on funding: Students who are unable to begin their studies in the 2020 summer semester as originally planned will receive their BAFöG as if the attendance lectures had begun at the originally planned start of the semester.

Background: In principle, training assistance is provided "from the beginning of the month in which studies commences, but at the earliest from the beginning of the application month", § 15 (1) BAFöG. In this context, studies are "deemed to have commenced at the beginning of the month in which instruction or lectures actually begin", § 15b, paragraph 1 BAFöG. Postponing the start of the semester would thus have had an impact on all students who begin studying at one of the universities concerned at the beginning of the 2020 summer semester and apply for BAFöG. According to the statutory regulations, this would have meant that support would only have been possible from April 2020 and not from March 2020.
Lectures at my university do not take place as planned. Does this have an effect on my funding?

The period during which the university remains closed due to the pandemic is considered a lecture-free period and BAföG continues to be paid. However, as far as the universities maintain the teaching and training company through online learning offers during the closing times, it applies to all students who receive BAföG benefits that they are obliged to make use of this offer to the same extent as in the normal course of studies, according to their possibilities, and in this way to actually continue their studies.

**Background:** In principle, funding can only be granted to those who attend the universities, § 9 BAföG. Attendance at the university is only accepted if the student attends the courses and regularly takes part in them and if progress in his or her studies can be seen to be such that it can be expected that the desired study objective will be achieved.

I cannot present my matriculation certificate in time. What does this mean for my BAföG funding?

If, due to the Corona Pandemic, the necessary proofs for receiving BAföG benefits – such as the matriculation certificate (Immatrikulationsbescheinigung) – cannot be presented because special circumstances such as the restriction or discontinuation of teaching activities do not allow this, BAföG benefits can continue to be paid. The “Amt für Ausbildungsförderung” requires a declaration from the student with the following information:

- Subject of studies
- Number of semesters
- Name of the university
- Indication whether the studies are full-time
- Information that the student is not on leave during the summer semester
- Declaration by the student that he or she has not submitted an application for funding to another benefit agency (e.g. another BAföG office or with regard to SGB benefits).

We will be happy to send you a sample declaration on request, if you are actually unable to present your matriculation.

**Background:** In principle, the student must prove that he or she is enrolled at a university in a course of study that is eligible for support. For this proof, there is actually form 2. Presenting the matriculation certificate replaces the need to present form 2. Furthermore, the “Ämter für Ausbildungsförderung” at the Studentenwerke are only responsible if the student is enrolled at a university in their area of responsibility.
I cannot submit the necessary proof of performance (e.g. if I fail the exams). What effect does this have on my funding?

If the exam fails due to the Corona crisis and the required proof of performance cannot be submitted to the “Amt für Ausbildungsförderung” in time, BAföG can continue to be paid.

The student must submit a declaration that he/she has actually completed / passed the corresponding exam. For this purpose, it is necessary to submit the course of studies from which one can see the ECTS points achieved in the respective semesters and/or the total amount of ECTS points achieved (plus a declaration of when the ECTS points were achieved).

**Background:** In principle, BAföG funding can only be granted from the fifth semester onwards if it can be proven that the student has achieved the usual level of performance by then. The exact regulations for this are contained in § 48 paragraph 1 BAföG. In the majority of cases, proof is provided by submitting form 5, which is issued by the aptitude assessor (full-time member of the teaching staff). This submission is mandatory for funding from the fifth semester onwards.

Due to the Corona crisis I am not able to complete my studies. The certificate of achievement is negative. What does this mean for my funding?

If you receive a negative performance record, please contact the “Amt für Ausbildungsförderung”, as the presentation of the performance record can be postponed, but each case must be examined individually. **The pandemic must be the sole cause of the delay in the presentation of the performance record.** The “Amt für Ausbildungsförderung” will examine the causality on the basis of the course of studies (overview of the performance in the individual semesters - passed and failed exams) and on the basis of the student’s declaration.

**Background:** The BAföG contains the possibility of postponing the presentation of the performance record, i.e. in justified exceptional cases, trainees can be given more time to complete the usual work, § 48 Para. 2 in conjunction with § 15 paragraph 3 BAföG. Thus, unavoidable interruptions in training due to a pandemic can also constitute a serious reason within the meaning of § 15, paragraph 3, no. 1 BAföG. According to § 48 paragraph 2 BAföG, the presentation date for performance certificates may also be postponed accordingly.

Due to the pandemic, I cannot finish my studies in the regular study period. Am I still entitled to a BAföG funding?

If the standard period of study (Regelstudienzeit) is exceeded due to the pandemic, BAföG can still be granted. **The cause of the excess is decisive.** Please contact the “Amt für Ausbildungsförderung”, as each case must be examined individually. **The pandemic must be the sole cause for exceeding the standard period of study.** The “Amt für Ausbildungsförderung” will examine the causality on the basis of the course of studies (overview of the performance in the individual semesters - passed and failed exams) and on the basis of the student’s declarations.
**Background:** The BAföG contains the possibility of being granted beyond the maximum duration of funding, § 15 Abs. 3 BAföG. Thus, unavoidable interruptions in studies due to a pandemic can also constitute a serious reason in the sense of § 15, paragraph 3, no. 1 BAföG and students can be supported for an appropriate period of time longer.

**Is the receipt of graduation assistance (Studienabschlusshilfe) influenced?**

Trainees who are receiving graduation assistance and cannot complete their studies as planned within the duration of the graduation assistance due to the closure of their university or the postponement of the start of lectures will continue to receive the graduation assistance for up to 12 months even during the restrictions caused by the pandemic. However, the students remain obliged to participate in the online course offerings and to complete their studies quickly.

**I would like to get involved in the fight against the novel coronavirus in health care, in social institutions or in agriculture. How is my income credited towards BAföG funding?**

Income earned during the current grant period from activities in the fight against the pandemic - this includes income earned in the health care system, in social institutions or in agriculture - is only credited towards BAföG in the months in which it is earned (see § 53, paragraph 2 BAföG new). This means that this income is not credited in the other months of the BAföG approval period. In other words, the income earned in the context of pandemic relief is divided by the number of months in which the remuneration for this activity was earned and is also only credited to these months.

BAföG recipients retain their entitlement before and after a remunerated engagement in pandemic fighting. This crediting regulation applies retroactively from 01.03.2020 and is limited exclusively to this group of people! The basis for determining the period of income is the employment contract to be submitted.

The new calculation rule should also apply to cases in which no application has yet been issued, but is still being prepared (e.g. first decision for the summer semester period 04/2020 - 03/2021).

**Important:** If the previous method of calculation – with a distribution of income over the entire approval period – is more favourable, it will remain the same! However, there is no additional income value.