



Certification of Documents

Certified photocopies must fulfill several formal requirements.

Who can to certify official documents?

All public authorities and other bodies in the public sector that hold an official seal, such as the Ortsbürgermeister, Ortsvorsteher, Stadtverwaltung, Bürgeramt, Verbandsgemeindeverwaltung (local mayor and local representative, city and district administrations, public offices), churches organized under public law and courts and notaries, are able to certify documents. Certifications by attorneys, associations, auditors, accountants, technical experts, appraisers, translators, etc. are not recognized.

The formal requirements for official certifications stem from Para. 33 of the Federal Administrative Procedure Act and the administrative procedure laws of the individual states.

The official certification must at least include all of the following:

- a) a note that certifies that the copy/duplicate is identical to the original (authentication note)
- b) the date and the signature of the party issuing the certification
- c) the stamp of the official seal (an official seal generally includes an emblem. A stamp consisting only of words is not sufficient.)

If the copy is comprised of several pages, it must be apparent that every page comes from the same document. It is sufficient if only one page bears the certification note and the signature, provided that all pages are placed on top of one another (e.g. imbricatively), stapled and sealed in such a manner that a part of the official stamp is visible on every page.

Each page can also be certified separately. In this case, it must be ensured the name of the holder of the certification/document is on each page of the original.

If there is a copy on the front and the back of a page and the content of both sides is to be certified, the certification note must refer to the front and back of the page (for example: "It is hereby certified that this copy (front and back) is identical to the original"). If this is not the case, the front and the back must be authenticated separately.

In regard to notary certifications (with a string and a seal mark), the certification note only needs to appear on one of the pages of the copy or duplicate.

If the original contains a seal embossed in the paper (called an embossed seal), this will generally not be visible on the copy. The certification note on the copy must then be expanded to include the mention of the embossed seal of the issuer of the certificate/document on the original.

If you submit official certifications, such as certifications from official authorities, please ensure that the originals of these certifications have a stamp of the official seal. A certification issued via electronic data processing that does not contain a signature or a stamp of the official seal is considered valid if the original is presented; photocopies of such certifications must, however, be properly certified.

Outside of Germany the following entities are authorized to issue certified copies: the diplomatic missions of the Federal Republic of Germany and the authorities and notaries in the respective country that are authorized to carry out certifications.

Schools, public preparatory courses and universities are only permitted to certify documents that they have issued themselves.