

Education system

# Austria

described and compared with  
the Dutch system

This document contains information on the education system of Austria. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Austria for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

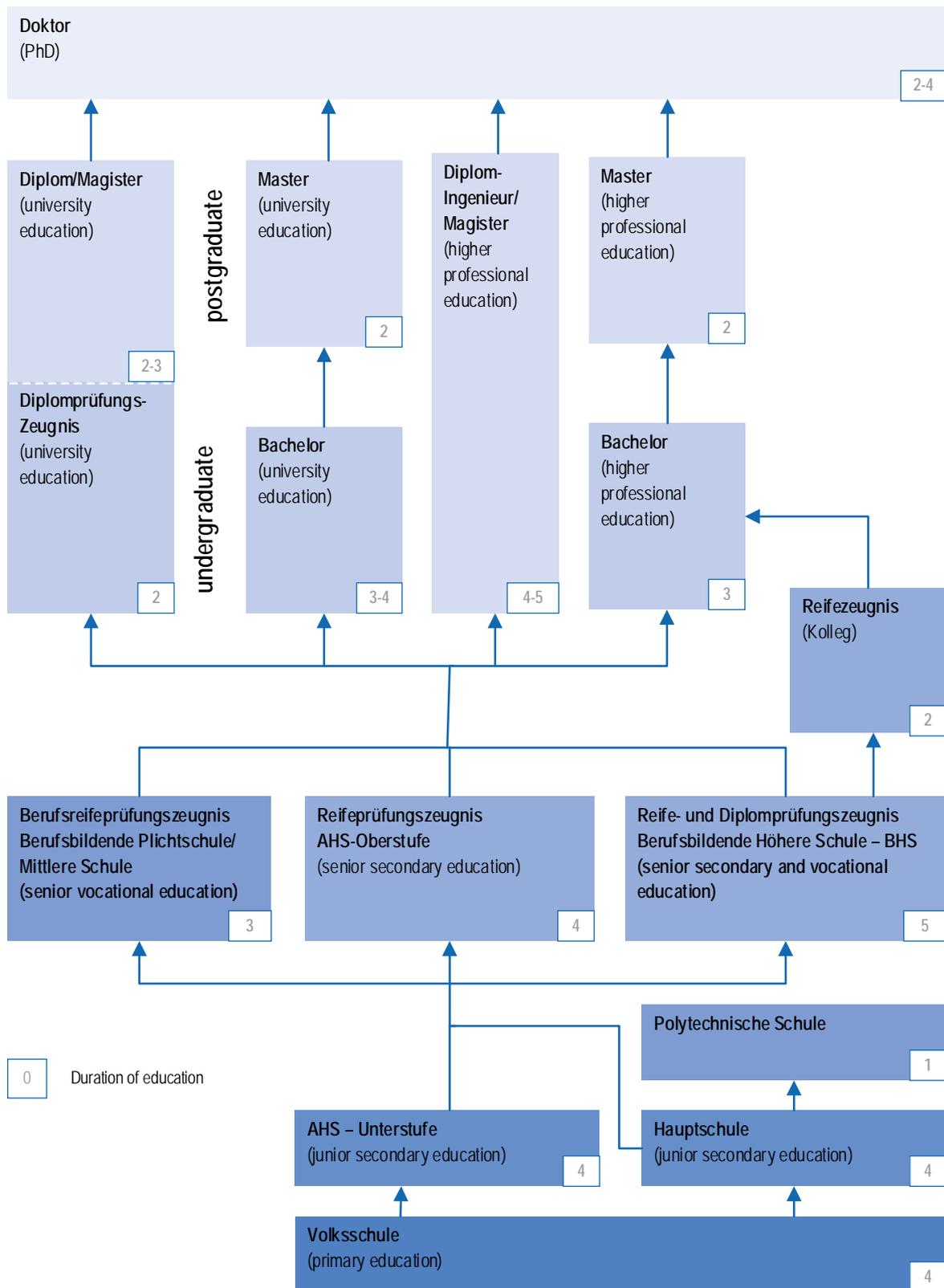
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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Education system Austria



## Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the most common foreign qualifications applicable to admission to higher education. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level		EQF level
<i>Berufsreifeprüfungszeugnis</i>	MBO diploma (qualification level 2 or 3)	2/3	2/3
<i>Reife- und Diplomprüfungszeugnis</i>	VWO diploma for its general education component	4+	4
<i>Reifezeugnis/Reifeprüfungszeugnis</i>	VWO diploma	4+	4
<i>Diplomprüfungszeugnis</i>	2 years of WO	6	6
Bachelor ( <i>Universität</i> )	WO bachelor's degree	6	6
Bachelor (FH)	HBO bachelor's degree	6	6
<i>Diplom-Ingenieur (FH)/Magister (FH)</i>	HBO bachelor's or master's degree	6/7	6/7
<i>Magister/Diplom (Universität)</i>	WO master's degree	7	7
Master ( <i>Universität</i> )	WO master's degree	7	7
Master (FH)	HBO master's degree	7	7

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- NLQF = Dutch Qualifications Framework. EQF = European Qualifications Framework.
- The EQF/[NLQF level](#) is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.
- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [the Dutch education system](#).
- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

## ■ Introduction

**Austria (*Republik Österreich*) is a federal republic with 9 federal states (*Bundesländer*), which are sometimes also referred to as provinces.**

Austrian education falls within the jurisdiction of both the federal *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research), and the ministries of Education of the *Bundesländer*. The *Bundesministerium für Nachhaltigkeit und Tourismus* (Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism) is responsible for programmes in agriculture and the natural environment.

Higher education in Austria is run according to a binary system, in which a distinction is made between academic education and higher professional education.

In principle the language of education is German, although bilingual primary and general secondary education is provided to Slovenian, Hungarian and Croatian minorities. There are also private higher education institutions, twelve of which are recognized since 2000. These institutions also provide programmes in English.

Education is compulsory from the ages of 6-15, and can also be offered by private schools, provided they have *Öffentlichkeitsrecht* (public status).

The academic year runs from October until June and is divided into 2 semesters.

## ■ Primary and secondary education

### Primary education

Primary education in Austria is provided at a *Volksschule* (elementary school, for children aged 6-10).

### Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into a junior and a senior level: the *Unterstufe* (grades 5-8, for children aged 10-14) and the *Oberstufe* (grades 9-12 or 9-13, for pupils aged 14-18 or 14-19). The *Unterstufe* includes the *Unterstufe* of the *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* (general secondary school, AHS) and the entire *Hauptschule* (secondary school). After the eighth year of *Hauptschule*, pupils can also continue on to the 1-year *Polytechnische Schule* to complete their 9 years of compulsory education.

The *Oberstufe* covers the following school types: general secondary education, and secondary vocational education.

### General secondary education

There are 2 types of *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* (AHS): 1 offering both the *Unterstufe* and *Oberstufe*, and 1 offering only the *Oberstufe* (the *Oberstufenrealgymnasium*). There are 3 subject clusters in the 4-year *Oberstufe*: the *Gymnasium* (including Latin and a choice between Greek or a second modern language), the *Realgymnasium* (including mathematics and other science subjects, Latin is optional) and the *Wirtschaftskundliches Realgymnasium* (including economics, psychology and philosophy, Latin is optional). The final examination (*Reifeprüfung*) consists of multiple oral and written examinations in at least 4 subjects (including German, mathematics and a foreign language). The *Reifezeugnis* or *Reifeprüfungszeugnis* (final examination certificate) grants access to all forms of higher education.

In terms of level, the *Reifezeugnis* or *Reifeprüfungszeugnis* is comparable to a VWO diploma.

### Secondary vocational education

The *Berufsbildende Höhere Schule* (BHS) and *Bildungsanstalt für Kindergarten/Sozialpädagogik* provide 5-year secondary programmes with a combination of general and vocational subjects, allowing pupils to obtain the *Reife- und Diplomprüfungszeugnis*. This certificate grants access to all forms of higher education, as well as to various (regulated) professions. Students who continue on to a related programme at a *Fachhochschule* can be granted a maximum exemption of 1 year. Common school types within the BHS include the *Handelsakademie* and the *Höhere technische und gewerbliche Lehranstalten*.

In terms of level, the *Reife- und Diplomprüfungszeugnis* is comparable to a VWO diploma for its general education component.

Since 1997 *Berufsbildende Pflichtschule* (*Berufslehre und Berufsschule*) and *Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule* also offer vocational programmes allowing to obtain admission to higher education: students must first complete the vocational programme of at least 3 years and then sit the *Berufsreifeprüfung* examination in 4 subjects, including German, mathematics, and a foreign language. The *Berufsreifeprüfungszeugnis* grants access to all forms of higher education.

In terms of level, the *Berufsreifeprüfungszeugnis* is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 2 or 3, depending on the duration and the specialisation of the programme.

### Post-secondary education

A separate category is the *Kolleg*, where 2-year programmes in economics, technology and tourism are provided. Admission to the *Kolleg* is granted by the *Reifezeugnis*. The graduate certificate of these programmes is also called *Reifezeugnis*. These programmes contain only vocational subjects, and usually are comparable to the short HBO programmes in the Netherlands.

## ■ Admission to higher education

The *Reifezeugnis*, *Reifeprüfungszeugnis* and *Diplomprüfungszeugnis* as well as the *Berufsprüfungszeugnis* grant admission to all forms of higher education.

Admission to the *Fachhochschulen* (Universities of Applied Sciences) is granted by the *Reifeprüfung*, *Berufsreifeprüfung* or a completed professional programme plus relevant work experience.

## ■ Higher education

Higher education is offered at 3 types of postsecondary institutions:

- Öffentliche Universitäten/Public Universities (22)
- Fachhochschulen/Universities of Applied Sciences (21)
- Privatuniversitäten/Private Universities (12)

Since 2004, bachelor's and master's programmes have been offered at universities and *Fachhochschulen*.

## ■ University education

The following institutions are part of the public university system: general *Universitäten*, *Medizinische Universitäten*, *Technische Universitäten*, *Theologische Hochschulen*, art universities, and universities specialised in mining, economics, soil culture or veterinary science. Private institutions are generally quite specialist in nature.

### **Magister/Diplom**

The nominal duration of these traditional programmes is generally 4 to 4½ years. Programmes in engineering and physics, as well as some art programmes, last for 5 years, and 6 years for medicine and veterinary science. The study programme usually consists of 2 parts (*Studienabschnitte*): the first *Studienabschnitt* and the second *Studienabschnitt*, which each conclude with a *Diplomprüfung* (the first usually after 2 years). Upon completion of each *Diplomprüfung*, students are awarded a *Diplomprüfungszeugnis*.

In terms of level, the *Diplomprüfungszeugnis* is comparable to 2 years of university education (WO).

The programmes award the following titles:

- *Diplom*: programmes in technical specialisations usually confer the title of *Diplom-Ingenieur*, and in some exceptional cases Mag. techn.
- *Doktor*: general medicine and dentistry programmes confer the titles of Dr. med. univ. and Dr. med. dent. respectively.
- *Magister*: programmes in all other specialisations confer the title of *Magister* with a general indication of the specialisation taken:
  - *Magister/Magistra der Philosophie* (Mag. phil.) for linguistics and cultural sciences;
  - *Magister/Magistra der Naturwissenschaften* (Mag. rer.nat.) for technical programmes;
  - *Magister/Magistra der Künste* (Mag. art.) for music and art programmes.

An academic paper (*Diplomarbeit*) is a compulsory element of the programme. Following successful completion of the examination, students receive a diploma stating the type of programme that has been completed, the academic degree obtained and the statutory texts that apply to the diploma.

In terms of level, a *university diploma* with the academic degree of *Magister* or *Diplom* is comparable to a WO master's degree.

### **Bachelor**

The nominal duration of a bachelor's programme at a university is 3 years (180 ECTS), in exceptional cases 4 years (240 ECTS). After completion of the programme, students are awarded a bachelor's degree (BA / BSc).

In terms of level, a *Bachelor* (BA/BSc) obtained at a university is comparable to a WO bachelor's degree.

### **Master**

The subsequent master's programmes last 2 years (120 ECTS). Master's programmes conclude with a master's examination (*Masterprüfung*). Students' master's papers must first be approved before they can take part in this examination. After completion of the programme, students are awarded a master's degree (MA/MSc).

In terms of level, a *Master (MA/MSc)* obtained at a university is comparable to a WO master's degree.

### PhD

All final university examinations (except those for the bachelor's programmes) grant admission to doctorate programmes.

A *Doktoratsstudium* usually has a duration of 2 to 4 years. To graduate from a doctorate programme, students must write a doctoral thesis (*Dissertation*) and conduct independent research. For art programmes, the creation of an artwork is the condition for obtaining a *Doktor* degree. Graduates are awarded the degree of *Doktor*, with a general indication of the specialisation, such as *Doktor/Doktorin der Philosophie* (Dr. phil.), *Doktor/Doktorin der Naturwissenschaften* (Dr. rer. nat.), *Doktor/Doktorin der Rechtswissenschaften* (Dr. iur.) and *Doktor/Doktorin der Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften* (Dr. rer. soc. oec).

## ■ Higher professional education

Higher professional education programmes are offered by *Fachhochschulen* and are available in the following sectors: economics, tourism, engineering, healthcare, social science relating to the promotion of personal, social and cultural welfare (*Agogie*), media and design. Nowadays, teacher training programmes offered by *Pädagogische Hochschulen* are also part of higher education in Austria.

### **Diplom-Ingenieur (FH)/Magister (FH)**

These programmes have a duration of 4 to 5 years, including a work placement semester (*Berufspraktikum*).

In technical specialisations, the title of *Diplom-Ingenieur (FH)* is awarded; for all other specialisations, the *Magister (FH)* degree is awarded.

Both of these qualifications also grant admission to university doctorate programmes, in which case the nominal length of the doctorate programme is extended by the difference in length between the *Fachhochschule* programme and that of the university.

In terms of level, a *Diplom-Ingenieur (FH)/Magister (FH)* obtained at a *Fachhochschule* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's or master's degree.

### Bachelor (FH)

The nominal duration of *Fachhochschule* bachelor's programmes is 3 years (180 ECTS). After completion of the programme, students are awarded a *Bachelor* (FH).

In terms of level, a *Bachelor* (FH) obtained at a *Fachhochschule* is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree.

### Master (FH)

The related master's programmes (which are still very limited in number) last 2 years (120 ECTS). After completion of the programme, students are awarded a *Master* (FH). This qualification also grants admission to doctorate programmes.

In terms of level, a *Master* (FH) obtained at a *Fachhochschule* is comparable to an HBO master's degree.

## ■ Assessment systems

Numerical grade	Description	Meaning
1	<i>Sehr gut</i>	Excellent
2	<i>Gut</i>	Good
3	<i>Befriedigend</i>	Satisfactory
4	<i>Genügend</i>	Sufficient
5	<i>Nicht genügend</i>	Unsatisfactory

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was introduced at the start of 1999 for all bachelor's and master's programmes, and in October 2002 for the traditional Diplom/Magister programmes. More information on the ECTS is available in the [ECTS User's Guide](#) issued by the European Commission.

More information about the value of foreign grades can be found on our [website](#) (Dutch only).

## ■ Bologna process

Since 1999, universities are legally permitted to offer bachelor's and master's programmes. Since 2002, Austrian institutions have been able to award joint degrees in co-operation with international institutions. As of the 2008/2009 academic year, 82% of all university programmes and 95% of all *Fachhochschule*

programmes were set up according to the bachelor's-master's degree structure. Nearly all private institutions have now also switched to the new system.

Information on the current situation can be found on the official [website](#) of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

## ■ Qualification frameworks

The development of a complete national qualifications framework (*Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen* NQR), including non-higher education qualifications, is still under way. The national qualifications framework will consist of [8 levels](#). The responsibility for the central administration and co-ordination of the NOF in Austria lies with the national coordination point (NCP/NQR *Koordinierungsstelle*).

More information is available on the [website](#) of the national coordination point: *Das Qualifikations Register*.

## ■ Quality assurance and accreditation

Recognition of educational institutions is based on the Austrian Universities Act 2002. An [overview](#) of recognized postsecondary institutions can be found on the website of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

In 2000 the *Universitäts-Akkreditierungsgesetz* (the University Accreditation Act) came into force, which regulates private education, and university education provided by foreign institutions in Austria.

The *Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria* (AQ Austria) is responsible for the quality assurance and accreditation in Austria (see [Useful links](#)).

## ■ International treaties

The 1985 equivalence agreement between the Netherlands and Austria applies to both academic and higher professional education, and states that for further study or doctorate programmes, candidates are exempt from Dutch examinations if they take or have taken Austrian examinations in equivalent specialisations; exemptions must also be awarded for periods of study of equal length.

Austria both signed and ratified the 1997 Lisbon Convention. The convention came into force on 1 April 1999.

## ■ Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement is available to students in German and English upon request since October 2003.

More information on the Diploma Supplement is available on the [website](#) of the European Commission.

## ■ Composition of file

For higher education, students must submit the final diploma stating the academic degree awarded after the final examination. A transcript is also required. Students who have completed a traditional university programme must also provide their results (*Diplomprüfungszeugnis*) of their *Studienabschnitt*.

For secondary education, students must submit their diploma and transcript. No translation is required for Austrian documents.

## ■ Overview of higher education institutions

Website of the *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (*Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research*) with a list of Austrian state education institutions and recognised private institutions in [German](#) and [English](#).

The website also offers overviews (German/English) per type of institution:

- [Offentliche Universitäten/Public universities](#)
- [Fachhochschulen/Universities of applied sciences](#)
- [Privatuniversitäten/Private universities](#)

## ■ Useful links

- [Website](#) of the Austrian *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (BMBWF), the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. BMBWF is also the Austrian [NARIC](#) and provides information on higher education and on international developments in Austria, and also gives [information](#) on primary and secondary education and on education at *Pedagogische Hochschulen*.
- [Website](#) of the coordination point for the Austrian national qualifications framework, *NQR-Koordinierungsstelle in Österreich* (NKS)/*National Coordination Point for the NQF in Austria* (NCP).
- [Website](#) of the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria). And the German [website](#) of *die Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria* (AQ Austria).