

The education system of

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.

Disclaimer

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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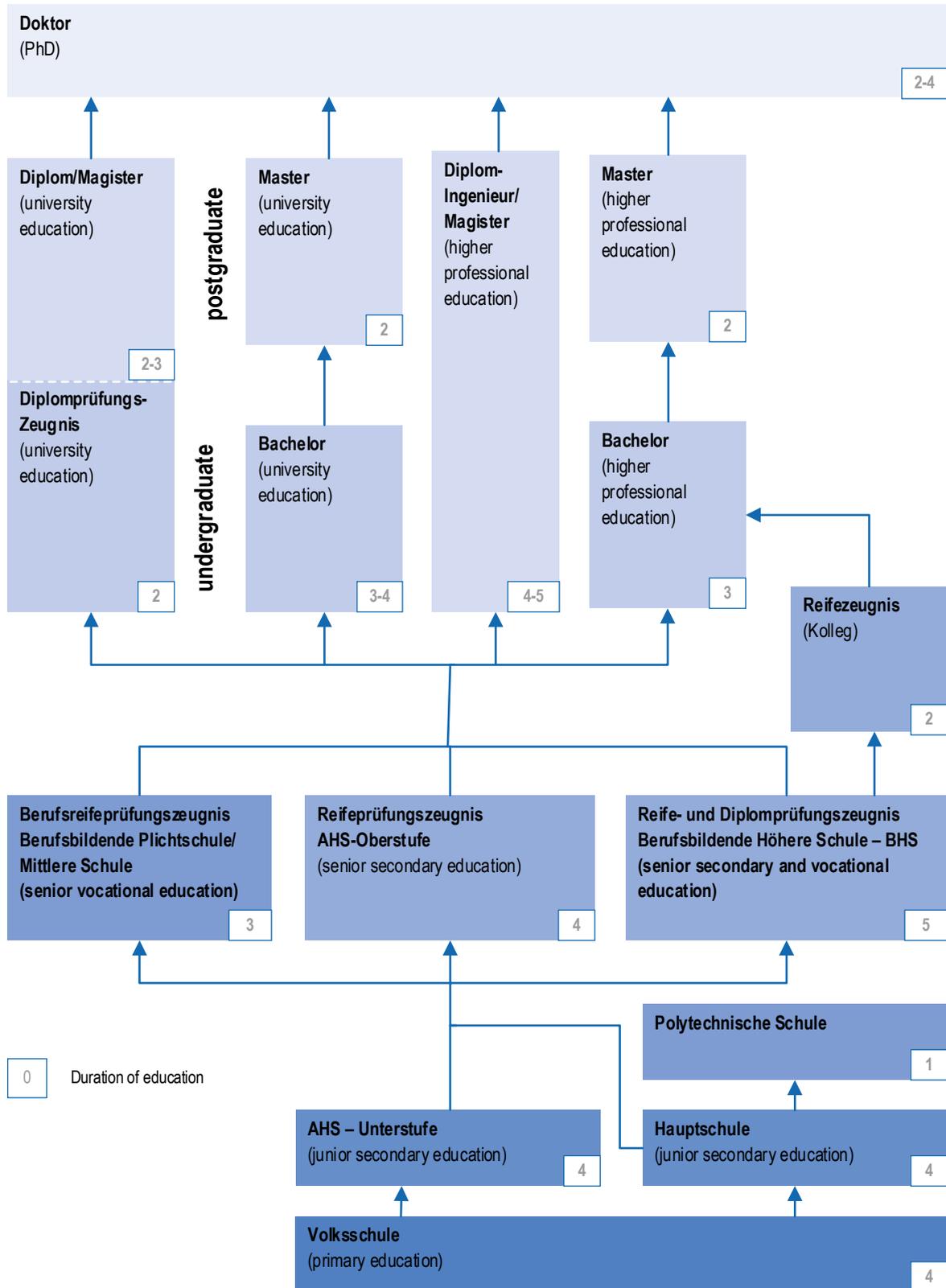


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■ Background

- **Country:** Austria, officially the Republic of Austria (*Republik Österreich*).
- **Responsible for education:** 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 study programmes in agriculture and the natural environment.
- **EU membership:** EU Member State since 1995.
- **Bologna process:** Austria has been a member of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) since 1999. 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. At the moment, all university programmes and all *Fachhochschule* programmes are set up according to the bachelor's-master's degree structure. See also the page about Austria on the [EHEA website](#).
- **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 Recognition Convention.
- **Compulsory education:** ages 6-15, and can also be offered by private schools, provided they have *Öffentlichkeitsrecht* (public status).
- **Language of instruction:** in principle, the language of instruction is German, although bilingual primary and general secondary education is provided to Slovenian, Hungarian and Croatian minorities. There are private higher education institutions that also offer study programmes in English.
- **Academic year:** from October to June (2 semesters).

Flow chart: 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	NQR level	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level	EQF level
<i>Berufsreifeprüfungszeugnis</i>	-	MBO diploma, qualification level 2 or 3	2/3
<i>Reife- und Diplomprüfungszeugnis</i>	5	VWO diploma for its general education component	4+
<i>Reifezeugnis/Reifeprüfungszeugnis</i>	-	VWO diploma	4+
Bachelor (Universität)	6	WO bachelor's degree	6
Bachelor (FH)	6	HBO bachelor's degree	6
<i>Diplom-Ingenieur (FH)/ Magister (FH)</i>	-	HBO bachelor's or master's degree	6/7
<i>Magister/Diplom (Universität)</i>	7	WO master's degree	7
Master (Universität)	7	WO master's degree	7
Master (FH)	7	HBO master's degree	7

Note:

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- [NQR](#) = *Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen*. [NLQF](#) = Dutch Qualifications Framework. [EQF](#) = European Qualifications Framework.
- The EQF or 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: [education and diplomas the Netherlands](#).
- [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.

■ 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 level: the *Unterstufe* (grades 5-8, ages 10-14); and
- a senior level the *Oberstufe* (grades 9-12 or 9-13, ages 14-18 or 14-19).

The *Unterstufe* includes the *Unterstufe* of the *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* (AHS, general secondary school) and the entire *Hauptschule* (secondary school). After the 8th 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 2nd modern language);
- the *Realgymnasium* (including mathematics and other science subjects, Latin is optional);
- 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 study 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.

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

Types of institutions

Four [types of institutions](#) provide higher education in Austria:

- *Öffentliche Universitäten*/Public Universities (22)
- *Fachhochschulen*/Universities of Applied Sciences (21)
- *Privatuniversitäten*/Private Universities (16)
- *Pädagogischen Hochschulen*/University colleges of teacher education (14)

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.

Students can obtain the following diplomas:

- *Magister/Diplom*
- Bachelor
- Master
- PhD

Magister/Diplom

The [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*.

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 [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 lasts 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 [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

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

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](#) (in Dutch only).

■ Qualification frameworks

Austria introduced the national qualifications framework in March 2016. The *Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen* (NQR) has 8 levels. Each level is described under [NQR-Qualifikationsniveaus I bis VIII](#).

More information can be found on this website of the coordination point for the Austrian national qualifications framework: [Koordinierungsstelle für den NQR | Österreich](#) (in German) and [Coordination Point for the NQF | Austria](#) (in English).

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

The [Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria](#) ([AQ Austria](#)) is responsible for the quality assurance and accreditation in Austria.

Recognition of educational institutions is based on the Austrian Universities Act 2002. See also the [overview of recognised institutions](#) provided by 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.

■ Checking documents

Secondary education

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

Higher education

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 *Studienabschluss*.

Diploma supplement

From 2003, the diploma supplement (in German and English) is available to students on request.

More information on the Diploma Supplement (DS) is available on the [Europass website](#), including [examples of diploma supplements](#).

Credential evaluation

Nuffic evaluates qualifications according to the principles of the [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#) (1997). A practical implementation of these standards can be found in the European [EAR manual](#).

■ Overview of higher education institutions

The Austrian *Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research) provides an [overview of the Austrian education system for higher education](#) (in German). The information is also available in [English](#).

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

- [Öffentliche Universitäten/Public universities](#)
- [Fachhochschulen/Universities of applied sciences](#)
- [Privatuniversitäten/Private universities](#)
- [Pädagogischen Hochschulen/University colleges of teacher education](#)

Useful links

- The Austrian [Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung \(BMBWF\)/Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research](#). BMBWF is also the Austrian [Enic-Naric](#) and provides [information about studying in Austria](#).
- The coordination point for the Austrian national qualifications framework: [Koordinierungsstelle für den NQR | Österreich \(NKS\)/Coordination Point for the NQF | Austria \(NCP\)](#).
- [Die Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria \(AQ Austria\)](#). Or the English website: [the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria \(AQ Austria\)](#).

Glossary

- **Bologna process:** The process that started after 29 European Ministers of Education signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999, with which they agreed, among other things, to create a European Area for Higher Education (EHEA): "An open space that allows students, graduates, and higher education staff to benefit from unhampered mobility and equitable access to high quality higher education". This includes setting up a system based on 2 cycles, undergraduate and graduate, also known as the bachelor-master structure. In 2003 a [third cycle](#) was added for doctoral programmes. The EHEA currently has [48 members](#).
- **Duration:** The official length of the full-time programme (not part-time) without study delay.
- **Graduate programme:** A higher education programme after completion of a bachelor's degree. See also the description in the Nuffic Glossary: [graduate](#).
- **Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC):** The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, was drafted in 1997 by the Council of Europe and Unesco to facilitate and promote fair recognition among Parties of the Convention. Read more on the [website of the Council of Europe](#).
- **Undergraduate programme:** A programme for a bachelor's degree. See also the description in the Nuffic Glossary: [undergraduate](#).