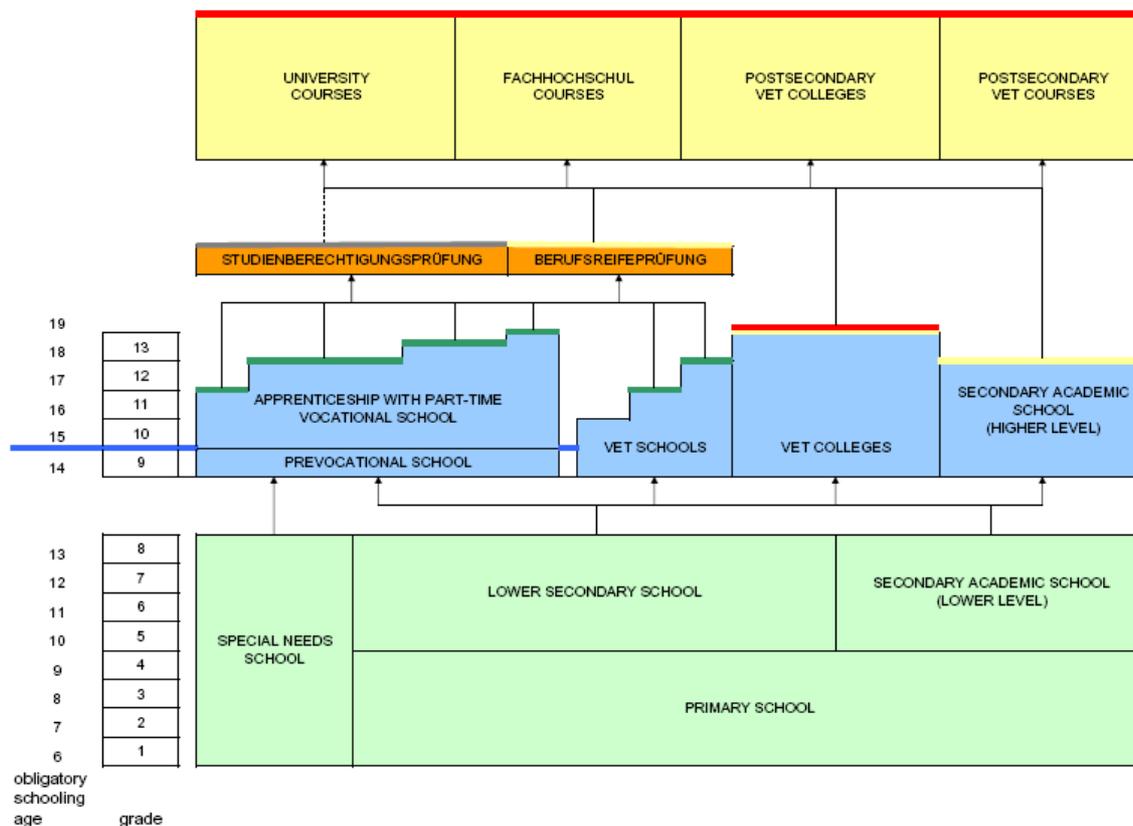


EDUCATION IN AUSTRIA

In Austria **general compulsory schooling** applies to all children and lasts for nine years. The Austrian school system provides a variety of education and training options which are designed to meet the needs and interests of children and their parents.



Primary level

Compulsory education starts with a four-year **primary school (Volksschule)** in September following a child's sixth birthday. Primary schools are designed to provide all pupils with the same elementary education. Their task is to impart a comprehensive and well-balanced general education, thus fostering the children's social, emotional, intellectual and physical skills and abilities. **Special needs schools (Sonderschulen)** promote and educate mentally or physically disadvantaged children and prepare them for integration into the world of work.

Secondary level

After primary education, pupils have the choice between two types of school, both covering a period of four years: They may attend **lower secondary school (Hauptschule)** or the lower level of an **academic secondary school (allgemeinbildende höhere Schule)**. **Lower secondary schools** provide pupils with a basic general education, prepare them for working life and, at the same time, impart to them the knowledge and skills required for transfer to schools at the upper secondary level. The lower level of **academic secondary schools** aims to impart a broad and advanced secondary general education. Pupils may attend a school or college with the focus on either **general** or **technical and vocational education**.

The main aim of schools offering **general education** is to provide pupils with standard entry qualifications for university-level education and a solid basis for more specialised education and training careers. They are attended for another four years and concluded with a final examination; graduates obtain the Certificate of Secondary Education called Reifeprüfung-

Certificate. Within the framework of school autonomy and pilot projects, the individual schools may modify their curricula and develop their own specific profiles.

Apart from these schools providing general education, there is a great variety of **schools and colleges offering technical and vocational education and training (TVE)**. In principle, two institutional paths may be distinguished between. Students who have completed their compulsory schooling period may either opt for an apprenticeship in the framework of the **dual training system** or continue their education at a **secondary TVE school (berufsbildende mittlere Schule)**, which provides medium secondary vocational training, or at an **advanced-level secondary vocational school (berufsbildende höhere Schule)**. About twenty percent of all students complete their ninth year of compulsory schooling at a one-year **prevocational school (Polytechnische Schule)**, which qualifies them for transition to apprenticeship training within the dual system. Training for an apprenticeship occupation is provided partly in a **company** and partly through part-time attendance of a **vocational school for apprentices (Berufsschule)**. In 1997, an additional possibility of access to university-level education (universities and Fachhochschule courses) for skilled workers has been established: the so-called **Berufsreifeprüfung**.

The Secondary TVE schools start after the eighth year of schooling and last for between one and four years. Also the **advanced-level secondary vocational schools** start after the eighth year of schooling; after five years and a school-leaving examination, successful graduates obtain the Certificate of Secondary Education and TVE-Diploma (called Reifeprüfung-Certificate). Types of TVE schools and colleges include: secondary business schools (Handelsschulen), secondary colleges for business administration (Handelsakademien), secondary schools for occupations in the social services sector (Schulen für Sozialberufe), secondary schools and colleges for agriculture and forestry (land und forstwirtschaftliche Schulen) and a wide range of schools and colleges for occupations in the technological, business and artistic fields. Pupils of technical schools are trained in several workshops one day every week. Beyond that eight weeks of internship in holidays.

Tertiary level

Graduates of an academic secondary school or an advanced-level secondary vocational school who boast the Reifeprüfung-Certificate as well as those who have passed the Berufsreifeprüfung are entitled to study at **academies (Akademien)** and **post-secondary TVE colleges (Kollegs)** and are granted access to **universities, the universities of arts** and to **polytechnical institutes (i.e. the universities of applied sciences, Fachhochschulen)**.

Adult education

Neither continuing education and training (CET) nor vocational education and training (VET) are regulated by law, but offers for both forms of training are provided, above all, by the representations of interest of the social partners and their establishments and complemented by offers of private providers. The adult education sector affords the possibility of acquiring additional qualifications by enrolling in post-secondary colleges and schools for people under employment, master craftsperson courses (Meisterschulen) and parttime industrial master colleges (Werkmeisterschulen), specialist colleges (Fachakademien) and universities. Following the principle of lifelong learning, self-study and self-tuition play a key role in adult education; CET and VET offers are increasingly complemented by innovative technologies, such as e-learning