

03 Part-time vocational schools

Young people who have concluded an apprenticeship agreement with an authorised apprenticeship trainer (company) or a training contract are obliged to attend part-time vocational school. This type of vocational education and training is termed dual VET system (or dual system) as educational tasks are split between two providers: **the company or supra-company institution and part-time vocational school**.

The Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy is responsible for the **training regulation** (the contents of company-based training), the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs for **pedagogical matters** of part-time vocational school.

Company-based training is **financed** by the training enterprise, the costs for part-time vocational school are borne by the public, with the federal government and provincial governments sharing the costs. The federal provinces are responsible for the construction and equipment of part-time vocational schools. The federal and provincial governments each contribute 50% of the funds for part-time vocational school teachers.

Occupational areas

Part-time vocational schools are attended for as many school years as necessary for the apprenticeship training. Depending on the apprenticeship, the length of training is between two and four, but usually **three years**. Currently there are some **200 recognised apprenticeships**, which can be summarised under the following groups of apprenticeships:

- Construction engineering
- Office, administration, organisation
- Chemical industries
- Printing, photographic, graphic and paper industries
- Electrical engineering, electronics
- Catering
- Health and body care
- Commerce and trade
- Wood, glass and ceramic industries
- Information and communication technologies
- Food, beverage and tobacco industries
- Metal technology and mechanical engineering
- Textiles, fashion and leather industries
- Animals and plants
- Transport and storage

Due to ongoing structural changes in the economy and society, apprenticeship occupations are also subject to constant modifications. A **dynamic development of new apprenticeships** can be identified in the services sector in particular.

The **apprenticeship-leave examination** is taken after completion of the apprenticeship period to establish whether the apprentice has acquired the necessary skills and knowledge for the apprenticeship occupation in question and is able to carry out the activities particular to that occupation in a proper manner. The apprenticeship-

leave examination is divided into a **practical and a theoretical section** and consists of a **written and oral part**.

If the student has fulfilled requirements according to the teaching objective of the final year of part-time vocational school, the examination will only consist of the practical section.

In the course of the apprenticeship-leave examination of a four-year apprenticeship, candidates have the option to take a voluntary **additional area-specific exam**. Successful completion of this voluntary area-specific exam means the partial exam for the corresponding specialist area does not have to be taken as part of the overall *Berufsreifeprüfung* exam (also termed *Berufsmatura* in German, see below).

Following successful completion of the apprenticeship-leave exam, graduates have the following **continuing education and training (CET)** options, among others: taking the master craftsman exam for a craft, with parts of the exam waived; taking a **professional diploma examination** for another regulated craft or trade or being admitted to it where the entry requirement is a relevant initial VET qualification; access to further qualifications via the *Berufsreifeprüfung* exam or *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* exam as the prerequisite for taking up studies at universities, *Fachhochschulen*, post-secondary VET courses and university colleges of teacher education.

A curriculum with a framework character

The curriculum of part-time vocational school is a curriculum with a framework character which specifies learning outcomes, contents and procedures for planning and implementing learning processes. It enables teachers to conduct their educational work independently and responsibly within the given scope.

It is the task of the regional boards of education to lay down both the number of lessons and the syllabi of the individual subjects for the individual grades within the given framework by issuing additional curriculum provisions where this is not specified by the curricula.

The syllabus of every subject includes:

- the educational and teaching objective that specifies the learning outcomes, competences and skills which the pupils will be taught and the knowledge they are to have;
- the scope of teaching contents;
- the teaching principles as guidelines for the work of teachers.

Educational objectives

It is the task of part-time vocational school to teach the **basic theoretical knowledge** in part-time subject-specific classes, promote and expand the **company-based**

training or professional practice and expand **general education**.

Educational work at part-time vocational school takes account of the close connection with the world of work which is triggered by company-based training. On the basis of practical experiences, the pupils at part-time vocational schools are encouraged to independently acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes and take part in CVET measures.

The focus on **cross-curricular treatment** of the teaching content aims to qualify pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in different situations. **Project-oriented teaching**, particularly in the higher grades, makes it possible to understand the connections between the individual syllabi and subjects.

Holistic education implies that **personal development** is seen as very important at part-time vocational schools, with the focus on extending and developing social skills such as openness, teamwork and the ability to deal with conflict, promoting communicative skills and strengthening self-competence such as self-assessment, confidence and the ability to deal with stress. For this purpose, problem- and process-oriented teaching methods, group training sessions, partner work and other social forms of teaching as well as presentations, discussions, etc. are applied.

Educational content

Within the scope of this task, the compulsory subjects of the **curriculum** include: German and Communicative Competence, a job-related foreign language, Political Education, Business Studies and the necessary technical theory and practical subjects required for the respective apprenticeship occupation (including Religious Education in the provinces of Tyrol and Vorarlberg).

Optional subjects are a modern foreign language, German and Religious Education (except in Tyrol and Vorarlberg), with Physical Education and Sport possible as optional exercises.

Teaching in part-time vocational schools can be **organised** as follows:

- **All-year round:**
i.e. at least on one full school-day or at least two half school-days a week
- **By block:**
i.e. for at least eight weeks continuously
- **Seasonally:**
i.e. teaching takes place in block form at a particular time of year

The variety of organisation forms is due to an agreement between the business sphere and those responsible for school instruction and takes account of the needs of the individual economic sectors and regions.

Teachers at part-time vocational schools

At part-time vocational school, a distinction is made between teachers of Groups I, II and III. Teachers of Groups I and II have a teaching load of 23 hours per week and teach general education and business-related subjects (Group I) or occupation-related theory (Group II). Since 2007, part-time vocational school teachers have been trained at university colleges of teacher education, for which the following access requirements apply:

- a) for Groups I and II: successful completion of the matriculation and diploma exam of a specialist college for higher vocational education or successful completion of a matriculation exam or a *Berufsreifeprüfung* and a relevant VET programme;
- b) for Group III (occupation-related practice): successful completion of a specialist master craftsperson examination or an equivalent relevant qualification, and
- c) in all cases: at least three years of relevant professional practice.

Regular students who have fewer than 120 ECTS credits are obliged to provide evidence of general university entrance qualifications (e.g. the matriculation exam, the *Berufsreifeprüfung* exam or the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* examination).

The 1st and 2nd semesters as well as the 5th and 6th semesters must be completed on a part-time basis, the 3rd and 4th as full-time study courses. Graduates are awarded the academic degree Bachelor of Education (BE).

The provincial governments have sovereignty over vocational school teachers and employ future pedagogues as contract teachers at the beginning of their careers.

Characteristics of dual VET

The Austrian apprenticeship training system is a very **practice-oriented VET scheme** whose importance is rated highly across the country.

Due to the wide range of qualification options – from partial qualifications to high-tech occupations and the *Berufsreifeprüfung* certificate – apprenticeship training opens up all qualification opportunities offered by the Austrian VET market. Whether with or without the matriculation certificate, dual training is adjusted flexibly to the different talents and needs.

Young people who boast a matriculation certificate and take up an apprenticeship enjoy shortened training periods and **improved employment opportunities** upon successful completion of the apprenticeship-leave examination. There is a **high demand by the economy** for young people who complete an apprenticeship successfully; these **skilled workers** make up a **considerable proportion of self-employed people in business start-up statistics**. In addition, the path to self-employment has been made easier by the validation of the specialist qualifications acquired in the course of the training, which leads to the waiving of exam sections of the master craftsperson exam.

But apprenticeship training also offers young people with social or physical disadvantages or the less gifted a suitable track to realise their potential in the area of vocational skills, as individual needs are met in a very targeted manner, which makes it possible to provide major stimulus for the integration of this group of people into the world of work.

Inclusive vocational education and training

Inclusive VET aims to create a **suitable training track** at the level of apprenticeship training for socially or physically disadvantaged young people or less gifted youths to **realise their potential in the area of vocational skills**. Inclusive VET is offered both as an apprenticeship training scheme with a longer training period and as a VET programme that impart partial qualifications in order to provide access to the labour market for those people who cannot acquire an apprenticeship diploma. Thanks to the possibility of a **tailored training programme** it is possible to cater to the individual abilities, skills and needs in a targeted manner at the company and in special independent training establishments as well as at part-time vocational schools.

Cooperation between part-time vocational schools and the world of business

Cooperation and partnership between all stakeholders in VET independent of the place of learning is a key factor ensuring the success of the dual training system. Modern-day VET requires a close connection between theory and practice, between school-based instruction and in-company practice.

Large retail chains and also industrial enterprises are increasingly using the potential inherent in apprenticeship training and, in cooperation with part-time vocational schools, are developing **complementary training schemes** tailored to their **future skilled workers**. These intensified contacts and cooperation ventures between the world of business and part-time vocational school represent **major sources of stimulus** for the further development and quality assurance of apprenticeship training.

Support scheme: *Berufsmatura* – apprenticeship with the matriculation certificate

The support scheme “*Berufsmatura*: apprenticeship with the matriculation certificate”, which was launched in 2008, aims to open up prospects and use potential. Apprentices who have concluded an apprenticeship agreement or training contract are already given the opportunity to prepare for the *Berufsreifeprüfung* exam during their apprenticeship period in free-of-charge courses, with the possibility of already completing three partial exams before their apprenticeship-leave exam. Candidates have to pass one of the partial exams with positive results before the apprenticeship-leave exam so they are still eligible for the support scheme afterwards and are able to complete the remaining exams for the *Berufsreifeprüfung* free of charge up to a maximum of 5 years after the apprenticeship-leave exam. The costs for the preparatory measures are borne by the federal government. The organisation of the measure is carried out by provider organisations in the provinces.

Locations	Pupils
149	130,975

Source: *BMBF Zahlenspiegel 2013, school year 2012/2013*