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**Frequently asked questions
about the topic of apprenticeship
training**

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When can an apprenticeship be taken up and how do youths reach the dual system?

The prerequisite for taking up an apprenticeship is completion of nine years of compulsory schooling.

The search for an apprenticeship post basically works like any other job hunt on the labour market. Support is provided to youths by various service points and initiatives:

Assistance in the search for a specific apprenticeship post:

- Career guidance of Public Employment Service Austria (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich, AMS*)
- Online apprenticeship exchange of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (*Wirtschaftskammer Österreich*) and Public Employment Service Austria (*AMS, www.ams.at/lehrstellen*)

General information about the search for an apprenticeship post:

- Educational counselling and careers guidance offices of the economic chambers
- *BerufsInformationsComputer BIC* (career guidance tool, www.bic.at)
- Documents and materials of the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth (*BMWFJ*), apprenticeship glossary (*Lehrberufslexikon*)

Which institutions and people are responsible for apprenticeship training at the regional and federal level?

At the federal level, *BMWFJ* bears responsibility for the company-based part, and the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (*BMUKK*) for the school-based part of apprenticeship training. For the company-based part, the Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz, BAG*) and for the school-based part of apprenticeship training the School Organisation Act (*Schulorganisationsgesetz, SchOG*) applies.

The apprenticeship office (*Lehrlingsstelle*) plays a major role at provincial level. The apprenticeship office fulfils its tasks as a public authority. It is active in the sphere of competence delegated to it by *BMWFJ*. Its specific tasks comprise the following activities:

- Examination (jointly with the Chamber of Labour or *Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte*) of a company's suitability as a training company
- Recording of each individual apprenticeship contract
- Provision of advice for apprentices (jointly with the Chamber of Labour)
- Organisation of apprenticeship-leave exams and handling of subsidisation payments for training companies

Important people at provincial level include the provincial governors, who are entitled to withdraw a company's authorisation to train apprentices, for example.

What is the role of social partners?

Social partners play a major role in the apprenticeship training system. The Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship (*Bundes-Berufsausbildungsbeirat, BBAB*) comprises both the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (as the employers' representative) and the Federal Chamber of Labour (*Bundesarbeitskammer*, as the employees' representative). The *BBAB* submits to *BMWFJ* proposals in the form of expert opinions, e.g. about the introduction of new or the modernisation of existing apprenticeships. Such advisory boards are also set up at provincial level (*Landes-Berufsausbildungsbeiräte*).

What is the role of the provinces (only as part of their task as school providers)?

The federal provinces are responsible for constructing and equipping part-time vocational schools. In addition, they bear 50% of the costs for teaching staff of part-time vocational schools. The remaining 50% is paid by *BMUKK*.

How is apprenticeship training funded?

The training company bears the costs of company-based training. The largest part of costs is the payment for apprentices, the apprenticeship remuneration. Its amount is laid down for most apprenticeship occupations in collective bargaining agreements. There exist a number of subsidisation options for apprenticeship training from the Austrian government. They are handled by the apprenticeship offices.

How does a company become a training provider, who decides this? Do training companies have to meet any minimum requirements?

For the first provision of training, a company is obliged to submit a 'request for declaration' to determine its suitability for apprenticeship training. When the declaration has been issued, the company is entitled to train apprentices.

The company needs to fulfil the following prerequisites:

- *Fulfilment of legal conditions:*
Pursuant to the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act (*Gewerbeordnung*) the company must be entitled to carry out the activities in which the apprentice is to be trained.
- *Fulfilment of corporate conditions:*
The company needs to be equipped and managed in a way that it is in a position to impart all the required knowledge and skills to the apprentice. In addition, a sufficient number of professionally and pedagogically qualified trainers must be available in the company.

Who is responsible for company-based training?

The IVET trainer is responsible for company-based training (IVET = initial vocational education and training). In many cases this role is fulfilled by the company owner. But he can also appoint suitable employees from his company to carry out this task. Most trainers train as part of their main professional activity. Many training companies do not employ specific IVET trainers. Larger companies also employ full-time trainers and training managers, however.

IVET trainers need to show specialist competence as well as knowledge of vocational pedagogy and law. Their knowledge of vocational pedagogy and law is determined in the IVET trainer examination. But for those who complete the forty-hour IVET trainer course, this IVET trainer examination is waived. Some qualifications or certificates (such as the master craftsman qualification) are treated as equivalent to the IVET trainer examination or the IVET trainer course.

Is there a curriculum for company-based training?

The basis for company-based training is the training regulation, which is adopted by *BMWFJ*. For every apprenticeship occupation a training regulation is adopted. It is binding for the training provided in the training companies. Similar to a curriculum, the training regulation comprises all the competences that must be taught in company-based training.

Is the relationship between training company and apprentice regulated by any agreement?

For every apprenticeship relationship, an apprenticeship contract needs to be concluded between the authorised apprenticeship trainer and the apprentice. It must be drawn up in writing. The apprenticeship contract needs to specify a range of details, such as the title of the apprenticeship occupation, the duration of the apprenticeship period, the beginning and end of the training, a note concerning compulsory attendance of part-time vocational school, and much more.

What is the relationship between part-time vocational school and the company: do these cooperate?

Part-time vocational school and the training company frequently collaborate in practice. Talks are held between the IVET trainer and vocational school teachers about the young people's performance and behaviour. Vocational school teachers also meet regularly with specialists from the sector to exchange information about the respective subject. Various companies offer work placements for part-time vocational school teachers so they can find out about new company-specific developments, for example.

What is the training like at part-time vocational school?

Students at part-time vocational school attend occupation-related classes and general subjects. Specialist instruction at school also comprises practical training in workshops and/or laboratories. The curriculum for part-time vocational school is prepared by *BMUKK*. Attendance of vocational school is compulsory and makes up some 20% of the overall training time.

How do apprentices complete their training and what are graduates entitled to do?

Apprentices can complete their training by taking an apprenticeship-leave exam. This exam aims to determine if candidates have acquired the competences that are necessary for the occupation. The apprenticeship-leave exam comprises a practical and a theoretical section. The theoretical exam is waived if the apprentice has completed vocational school with positive results. The exam itself is held before an exam committee.

Graduates of an apprenticeship are NOT obliged to take the apprenticeship-leave exam. With the diploma they can call themselves 'skilled workers'. As a rule, better collective agreement conditions apply to them.

Do skilled workers have any options for acquiring higher qualifications (Berufsreifeprüfung certificate, master craftsperson certificate, etc.)?

Apprentices and apprenticeship graduates have several options for acquiring higher qualifications:

- *General higher education entrance qualification*
By taking the *Berufsreifeprüfung* examination, apprentices can acquire the general higher education entrance qualification. This entitles holders to attend universities, *Fachhochschule* programmes, university colleges of education, and post-secondary VET courses.
- *Master craftsperson qualification and qualifying certificates*
As well as unregulated there are also regulated trades in Austria, where a certificate of competence is required to exercise them. In a skilled craft this is above all the master craftsperson qualification, in other regulated trades the qualifying certificate. People over the age of 18 are entitled to take the master craftsperson or qualifying examinations. In theory, no subject-specific training is necessary for this. Access to a trade can also be obtained by means of an individual certificate of competence, in which case no examination needs to be taken.

Skilled workers (that is, people with an apprenticeship diploma) have many other options for acquiring higher qualifications, such as:

- *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* (access to higher education)
- Building craftsperson schools and part-time industrial master colleges
- Different courses at institutions of continuing education and training

At present, work is ongoing on developing specific tertiary education pathways for skilled workers.

What credits can be obtained for qualifications acquired abroad?

Credits can be obtained for exam certificates from other countries and training periods completed abroad (such as those completed as part of international exchange programmes), which are then recognised for the apprenticeship period in Austria. If evidence can be furnished that the training periods completed abroad are equivalent to the apprenticeship period in a specific occupation, this person can be admitted to the apprenticeship-leave exam. If an exam is taken abroad which is equivalent to an apprenticeship-leave exam in terms of acquired competences, this can be waived in Austria.

Upon application, vocational programmes completed abroad can be treated as equivalent to a relevant apprenticeship diploma by *BMWFJ*. Bilateral agreements have also been concluded to establish equivalence of apprenticeship certificates. To date, such bilateral agreements exist with the following countries or regions: Germany, South Tyrol/Alto Adige and Hungary. Between Germany and Austria, a total of 274 vocational qualifications are recognised, between Austria and South Tyrol 77 exam certificates are recognised as equivalent, and between Austria and Hungary 56 apprenticeship-leave exams are treated as equivalent to Hungarian skilled workers.

Facts & figures

- 205 apprenticeship occupations (as of August 2011)
- some 130 000 apprentices, of which 85 500 are male and 44 500 female (as of 2010)
- share of apprentices in their 1st year among 15-year-olds: 41.8% (as of 2010)
- some 48 360 apprenticeship-leave exams completed (in 2010)
- some 37 500 accredited training companies (as of 2010)