

OVERVIEW OF THE SWISS VET/PET SYSTEM

THE PATH OF PROFESSIONALS



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Swiss Confederation

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THE PATH OF THE PROFESSIONALS.

An initiative of the Confederation,
the Cantons and professional organisations

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VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING – THE ROAD TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER



Switzerland is a world champion when it comes to skilled workers – in various branches. Worldwide demand for Swiss professionals is high. Our upper secondary level vocational education and training (VET) programmes and tertiary-level professional education and training (PET) programmes constitute a successful model that other countries would like to emulate. In addition, our dual-track approach to learning opens the door to a wide range of education and training opportunities and career prospects since the content of VET/PET programmes closely matches the needs of companies and the labour market. All of these factors explain why 2/3 of all young people coming out of compulsory education decide to enrol in a VET programme. As highly trained workers, they will form the bedrock of our economy.

The dual-track approach to learning begins at the very start of the VET programme. While learning theoretical principles part-time at a vocational school, VET students learn practical skills as apprentices at a host company. This enables VET students to compare what they learn in school with the practical knowledge gained while working. This blend of theory and practice deepens their

degree of understanding, which leads to success later on when these students enter the labour market.

Upon successful completion of a final apprenticeship examination, VET students are awarded the Federal VET Diploma. This opens up a wide array of post-secondary education and training options. The considerable permeability of the Swiss VET/PET system ensures that individuals at all stages of their professional life will have the opportunity to plan and develop their skills as needed.

The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) is an optional diploma that Federal VET Diploma holders may obtain either by taking an additional examination immediately after their final apprenticeship examination or at a later point in time. FVB holders are entitled to directly enrol in a university of applied sciences (UAS). It is also possible for them to prepare for and take the University Aptitude Test, which opens the way for enrolment in any of Switzerland's cantonal universities or either of its two federal institutes of technology (EPF in Lausanne and ETH in Zurich).

In addition, there are many interesting tertiary-level professional education and training (PET) programmes available. PET programmes combine theoretical principles with practical know-how and prepare PET students for managerial positions.

Take control of your destiny by taking advantage of the many education and training opportunities open to you. The rewards are well worth the effort. I hope that your path will be one of discovery, joy and success!

Doris Leuthard,
Federal Councillor



THE MOST POPULAR EDUCATIONAL PATH

Two-thirds of all young people coming out of compulsory education enrol in a vocational education and training (VET) programme. And with good reason.

The VET/PET system is the path of professionals

VET and PET programmes combine theory and practice. Graduates are highly valued in the labour market.

The VET/PET system opens the way to a professional career

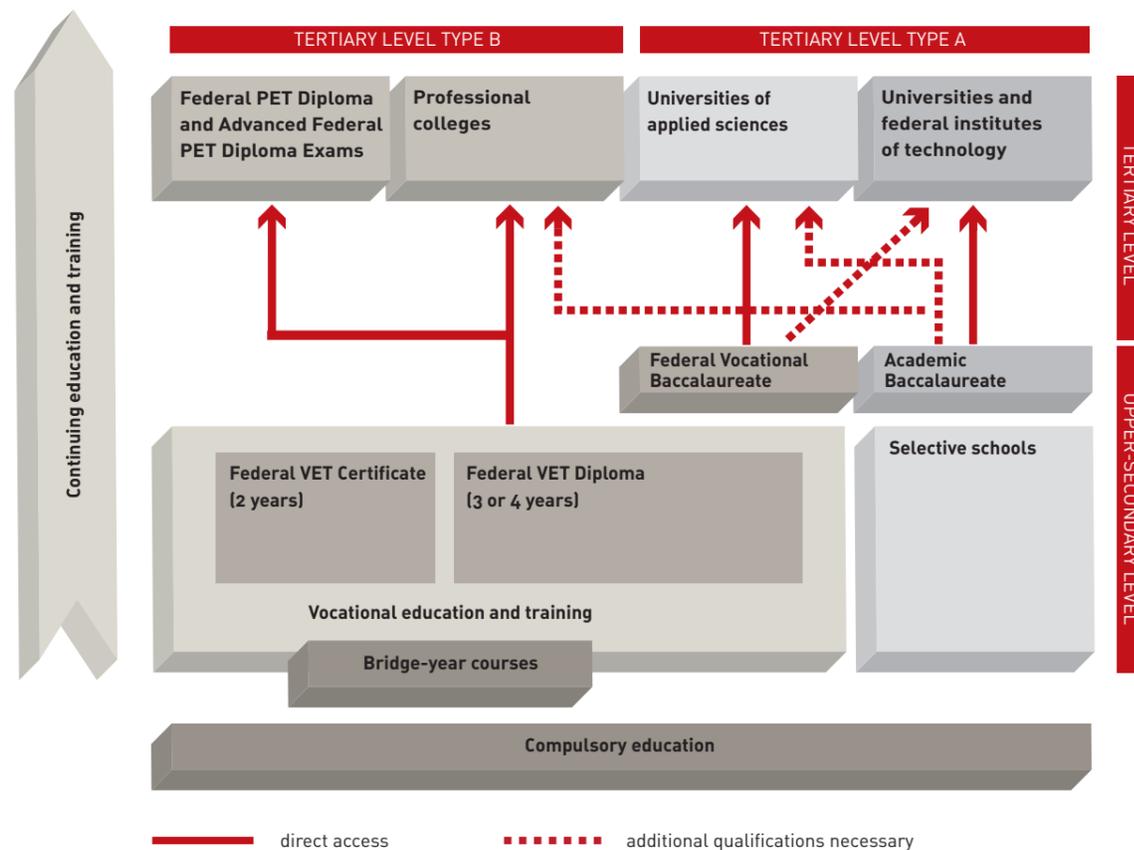
The Vocational Baccalaureate and PET programmes offer a wide range of job opportunities and interesting professional development prospects.

The VET/PET system is permeable

Students may change from one VET/PET programme to another and/or enrol in academic programmes.

THE SWISS EDUCATION SYSTEM

The VET/PET system is an important part of the Swiss education system. It offers various programmes, which are all compatible with one another.



The dual-track approach to VET/PET guarantees readiness for the labour market

The strength of VET/PET programmes is that they closely match the needs of the labour market: host companies and educational institutions provide students with exactly the training, skills and know-how needed on the labour market. VET/PET graduates therefore have very good job and career prospects.

Continuous relays from graduation to enrolment

There are no dead ends in the VET/PET system. Students are always able to take their education and training to a higher level: from the Federal VET Certificate to the Federal VET Diploma at upper secondary level to professional college degrees or national professional examinations at tertiary level (i.e. for either the Federal PET Diploma or the Advanced Federal PET Diploma). It is also possible for VET graduates to obtain the optional Federal Vocational Baccalaureate, which entitles them to enrol in a Bachelor's programme at a Swiss university of applied sciences.

Joint commitment

Another major advantage of the Swiss VET/PET system is the close cooperation between the Confederation, the Cantons and professional organisations. Professional organisations establish the content of VET/PET programmes and the qualifications needed for completion. Some of the skills and know-how are gained through a VET apprenticeship or a PET traineeship at a host company. The Confederation and the Cantons establish the general conditions for the VET/PET system. They also enact legislation and are responsible for overall supervision.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

Students coming out of compulsory education and training may enrol in a VET programme. VET programmes are intended to prepare students for direct entry into the labour market. With the dual-track approach to VET, students attend vocational instruction and general education classes study on a part-time basis at a vocational school.

The remainder of their time is spent doing an apprenticeship at a host company, where they gain practical skills and know-how. Depending on the occupation, VET students may also attend industry courses to acquire additional skills.

On completion of compulsory education, students wishing to enrol in a VET programme can choose between a 2-year VET programme to obtain the Federal VET Certificate or a 3-year or 4-year VET programme to obtain the Federal VET Diploma. The Cantons also organise bridge-year courses for students who lack the skills needed to make the transition from lower secondary level to an upper secondary level VET programme.



3-year or 4-year VET programmes for the Federal VET Diploma

Depending on the occupation, VET programmes last either three or four years. On completion of the chosen VET programme, students receive a Federal VET Diploma, which gives them the option of either entering the labour market directly or enrolling in a PET programme at tertiary level. VET students may also prepare for the optional Federal Vocational Baccalaureate Examination, either during the course of their VET programme or after they graduate (see page 12).

2-year VET programmes for the Federal VET Certificate

More practically-minded young people may enrol in a 2-year VET programme to obtain a Federal VET Certificate and gain direct access to the labour market. On completion of the 2-year VET programme, students still have the option of continuing their studies. In such case, they may apply to enter a 3-year or 4-year VET programme to obtain a Federal VET Diploma.

Bridge-year courses

Students coming out of compulsory education (i.e. completing lower secondary level) who do not meet the requirements for enrolment in a VET programme at upper secondary level may enrol in a bridge-year course to bring them up to speed. The bridge-year course may include preparatory vocational instruction and a pre-apprenticeship.

www.berufsberatung.ch and www.sbbk.ch >

[Links > Berufsbildungsämter](#)

VET programmes for adults

Adults who did not attend a 2-year, 3-year or 4-year VET programme can nevertheless obtain a corresponding VET Certificate or Diploma. The Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (SR 412.10) provides for two main options: enrolment in adult education and training programmes or undergoing qualification procedures. In the latter case, the aim is to assess the person's theoretical knowledge and practical experience and identify any gaps that need to be filled in order to obtain the desired Federal VET Certificate or Diploma.

www.sbbk.ch > [Links > Berufsbildungsämter](#)

Study/training locations

Vocational education and training is provided at three study/training locations:

- **Host company:** Host companies provide VET students with practical training through an apprenticeship. VET students familiarise themselves with the day-to-day tasks of the given occupation by generating productive output.
- **Vocational school:** Vocational schools provide VET students with vocational instruction and general education courses (one to two days per week).
- **Third-party training centres:** Third-party training centres offer industry courses, which provide VET students with practical skills and knowledge. These industry courses are intended to complement the practical training provided by the host company during the apprenticeship.

Choice of occupation

There are seven steps that need to be taken in order to make the right choice of occupation:

1. Take stock of your own interests and strengths.
2. Gain exposure to people who are involved in the occupation.
3. Compare your interests and skills with those needed for the occupation.
4. Take a closer look at the occupations and training programmes that interest you (e.g. by doing a pre-apprenticeship)
5. Assess the facts and make a choice
6. Look for an open apprenticeship position and enrol in a dual-track VET programme; or enrol in a full-time vocational school instead
7. Prepare for the dual-track or full-time VET programme

«I'LL BE GRADUATING FROM THE POLYGRAPHIC ENGINEERING COLLEGE (HF TGZ) NEXT YEAR»



Claudia Derrer

Trained as a printing technologist, currently works as a customer advisor while studying at the Polygraphic Engineering College (HF TGZ) in Zurich. Claudia Derrer came in 2nd in the printing technology field at the World Skills Championship 2007 in Japan. The Swiss team came in 3rd overall, placing Switzerland among the top nations worldwide. The team was comprised of 40 contestants from 38 different fields. All in all, over 800 young people from every continent put their technical know-how to the test. The World Skills Championship is held every two years.

What was the World Skills Championship like for you?

It was fascinating. We were in a completely foreign country, thousands of kilometres away from home. The Swiss team was like one big family. Our team spirit rose as time went by and we began to rely on one another. With so many spectators, I also learnt how to work under pressure. Everybody was watching us the entire time.

How does one qualify for the World Skills Championship?

After having passed my examination to obtain the Federal VET Diploma, the trade association asked me to come in for an interview. I was pre-qualified because I obtained an average score of 5.3 out of 6 on the examination. I was also quite convincing at the interview. I wanted to test myself: I can do it, I want to do it and I shall do it.

What impact will your success at the World Skills Championship have on your career prospects?

It raised my profile in this branch which is very important. I might have found it more difficult to find a new job without this publicity. My current employer wanted to give a young, goal-oriented person a chance.

Why did you decide to enrol in a vocational education and training programme? Why did you choose this particular occupation?

After spending nine years in school, I finally wanted to get a job and earn my own living. Printing technology is a field where manual skills are very important. I work well with my hands and don't have to sit in front of a computer all day. I also get to see the results of my work when the evening comes.

What made you decide to change occupation?

I have a solid foundation as a printing technologist. However, I knew from the outset that this was not what I wanted to spend my whole life doing. As a customer advisor, I can use my expertise to help customers find an optimal solution for their printing needs.

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

I'll most likely remain in this branch. I'll be graduating from the Polygraphic Engineering College (HF TGZ) next year. After that, I'll certainly continue training since technical progress in this branch occurs in leaps and bounds. I might also at some point consider becoming self-employed.

FEDERAL VOCATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (FVB)

Federal Vocational Baccalaureate holders are entitled to enrol in any of Switzerland's universities of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance examination. FVB holders may also enrol in a cantonal university or federal institute of technology (FIT) if they pass the University Aptitude Test.



The Federal Vocational Baccalaureate Examination

On completion of a 3-year or 4-year VET programme, students are awarded the Federal VET Diploma. Students may also attend a preparatory course for the optional FVB Examination. This may be done either during their VET programme or after graduation. In order to be admitted to an FVB preparatory course, students must either: have

passed an admission test; have obtained good marks from compulsory education (if attending an FVB preparatory course during the VET programme); or have obtained good marks from the VET programme (if attending an FVB preparatory course after graduating from the VET programme).

Preparing for the FVB Examination during the VET programme

Students enrolled in a 3-year or 4-year VET programme attend vocational instruction courses at the vocational school. They also have the option of attending general education courses to prepare for the FVB Examination. On average, students choosing this option spend two days per week away from the host company.

Preparing for the FVB Examination after graduating from the VET programme

Holders of the Federal VET Diploma may also attend an FVB preparatory course after graduation. The FVB preparatory course lasts two semesters if students enrol full-time or three to four semesters if they enrol part-time. Students may also prepare for the FVB Examination on their own or enrol in another programme.

FVB for direct access to UAS degree programmes

FVB holders are entitled to enrol directly in a Bachelor's degree programme at a university of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance exam. However, if the chosen course of

studies at the UAS is unrelated to the completed VET programme, the prospective student must have at least one year of work experience relating to the chosen course of studies.

FVB for indirect access to university or FIT degree programmes

FVB holders have indirect access to enrolment in a cantonal university or federal institute of technology (FIT). Basically, they first need to pass the University Aptitude Test (UAT) to gain admission.

Cantonal selective schools and other private schools offer one-year programmes to prepare FVB holders for the UAT.

Additional information: www.sbf.admin.ch > Themen > Bildung > Maturität

(available in German and French)



Michel Rast
Engineer, Director of the College of Engineering and Architecture at the University of Applied Sciences, Western Switzerland

Graduating with a Federal Vocational Baccalaureate is the best way to gain admission to a university of applied sciences. Why is this so?

Students graduating with an Academic Baccalaureate have direct access to cantonal universities and Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology. Students graduating with a Federal Vocational Baccalaureate have direct access to universities of applied sciences. As a result, FVB holders have access to the same level of university education as Academic Baccalaureate holders.

What is the difference between studying at a university of applied sciences and studying at a cantonal university or FIT?

Unlike studies at a cantonal university or FIT, UAS studies focus on developing the practical skills that students gained from previous professional experience – whether it be during their VET studies at a vocational school or during a traineeship. The characteristic feature of UAS teaching methods is the focus on practical aspects.

What job prospects are open to UAS graduates?

The practical skills and theoretical knowledge that UAS graduates gain during their studies may be applied in many different economic branches: in research, manufacturing, marketing or management; depending on one's talents, interests and opportunities.

The FVB and UAS have brought tremendous value to VET programmes. Do UAS degree programmes offer the same career prospects as university programmes?

Absolutely. For similar courses of study, such as engineering or economics, the labour market draws no distinction between UAS and university graduates. Starting salaries are even slightly higher for UAS graduates but then equal out later on.

Swiss university degrees are recognised throughout the European Union. What about UAS degrees?

With entry in force of the CH-EU bilateral agreements, all UAS degrees are recognised throughout the European Union. That said, certain professions such as architecture require five years of study or additional qualifications in order to obtain a Master's degree that will enable them to practice their profession in the EU.

«THE LABOUR MARKET DRAWS
NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN UAS
AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES»

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

PET programmes prepare experienced professionals for highly specialised or managerial positions. Students enrolled in PET programmes gain extensive knowledge and skills that match the needs of the labour market. For this reason, PET credentials are highly valued and sought after by employers. PET programmes are open to holders of a Federal VET Diploma who have gained several years of professional experience.



Career prospects – by the labour market, for the labour market

PET programmes offer motivated professionals a wide range of tertiary level education and training options, covering all professional fields. PET students may specialise in a given field or improve their professional skills. Part-time PET programmes exist so that students may continue working during their studies. This allows them to gradually apply what they learn in their PET programmes to their day-to-day work (and vice versa).

National professional examinations

The Federal PET Diploma and Advanced Federal PET Diploma are issued by professional organisations. This ensures that the knowledge and skills gained from the corresponding PET programmes match the needs of the labour market.

The Federal PET Diploma Examination is intended for people with several years of professional experience who have specialised in a given field. The Advanced Federal PET Diploma Examination is generally for people who have acquired a great deal of professional expertise and/or who intend to hold a managerial position in an SME.

Candidates may prepare for these national professional examinations on their own or attend preparatory courses. On completion of these courses, they take the corresponding national professional examination and obtain either a Federal PET

Diploma (e.g. Federal PET Diploma in Marketing) or an Advanced Federal PET Diploma (e.g. Advanced Federal PET Diploma in Information Technology; Advanced Federal PET Diploma in Human Resources, etc.).

Professional college degree programmes

Professional colleges provide students with the skills they need to work independently in a highly specialised field and/or in a managerial capacity. Students may enrol in a part-time degree programme, which enables them to work while studying; or they may enrol in a full-time degree programme, which includes a traineeship at a host company. At professional colleges, degree programmes are based on general syllabuses. Qualification procedures take place at the professional college itself. Full-time degree programmes last for two years and part-time degree programmes last for three years. Upon completion of the degree programme at the professional college, students are awarded a federally recognised professional college degree (e.g. professional college degree in Social Pedagogy; professional college degree in Business Administration, etc.).

Additional information:
www.berufsbildungplus.ch



Stefan Eisenring
 Business economist, Director of the Professional College of Southwestern Switzerland

What is the difference between professional colleges and universities of applied sciences?

These two types of tertiary level institutions have different admission requirements, priorities and degree programmes. Courses of study offered by professional colleges degree programmes generally require students to have solid expertise and several years of experience in their field. However, students do not need to have a Federal Vocational Baccalaureate. Another main difference is that universities of applied sciences build from upper secondary level general education skills and are also involved in applied research. Universities of applied sciences build from upper secondary level general education skills whereas professional colleges focus on developing upper secondary level vocational skills. For this, they emphasize practical skills as they relate to a specific profession without losing sight of general education aspects.

Professional organisations are responsible for establishing the content of professional education and training courses. How much value and recognition are given to professional college degrees and PET diplomas on the labour market?

Since professional organisations are responsible for establishing the courses of study leading to PET credentials, it is clear that such credentials are highly valued and recognised on the labour market.

What do holders of PET credentials offer?

Holders of PET credentials generally have a great deal of practical know-how, solid general education and strong social skills. Above all, they are highly motivated and hard workers. They are required to coordinate their work and studies and nevertheless render top quality in both areas.

What types of people pursue professional education and training?

The people who are generally drawn to professional education and training tend to place high expectations on themselves and on others. They also tend to deliver high output. Although they have gained solid expertise and know-how in their field, they seek to develop their abilities further and take on greater managerial responsibilities.

«**HOLDERS OF PET CREDENTIALS GENERALLY HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF PRACTICAL KNOW-HOW, SOLID GENERAL EDUCATION AND STRONG SOCIAL SKILLS...»**



OCCUPATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER GUIDANCE

Occupational, educational and career guidance counsellors are available for people wishing to either enter the labour market or change occupations.

Guidance counsellors help:

- Young people to decide which occupation or course of studies to pursue;
- Adults to plan their careers and/or change occupations;
- Adults to re-enter the labour market.

Guidance

An appointment with a guidance counsellor is a good way to clear up questions and decide on the best course of action. Appointments are free of charge for young people and partly fee-based for adults.

Occupational information centres

All of the cantons maintain occupational information centres, which provide information about all occupations, courses of study and continuing education and training courses.

www.berufsberatung.ch

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

VET/PET website

The national information campaign VETPLUS.CH is intended to make young people, adults and companies more aware of the advantages of the Swiss VET/PET system. The VET/PET website contains a brief description of the main offers together with news, tips and links to relevant information.

www.berufsbildungplus.ch

Website for occupational, educational and career guidance

The berufsberatung.ch website serves as a complete platform for all matters relating to choice of occupation; initial, higher and continuing education and training programmes; and career planning. The various occupations and training paths are explained in full detail.

www.berufsberatung.ch

Cantonal VET/PET agencies

The website of the Swiss Conference of VET/PET Agencies (SBBK) contains a list of all cantonal VET/PET agencies. These agencies are available to answer any questions relating to the Swiss VET/PET system.

www.sbbk.ch > [Links](#) > [Berufsbildungsämter](#)

VET/PET Lexicon

This VET/PET Lexicon contains definitions of the most frequently used terms relating to the Swiss VET/PET system (available in German, French and Italian).

www.lex.dbk.ch

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