

# Austria: Organisation of the Education System and of its Structure

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## [Introduction to educational institutions see also diagram](#)

### Pre-school and school level

**Nursery School** (= *Kindergarten*) is the traditional form of pre-primary education for children aged three to six in Austria. However, it does not form part of the school system. Kindergarten is optional and children attend at their parents' initiative. As of the academic year 2009/10, the provinces are required to ensure that children attend half-day child care institutions for 20 hours per week in the year before they start school, and by September 2010 the provinces must introduce obligatory kindergarten attendance for a minimum of 16 to 20 hours over a minimum of 4 days per week (agreement pursuant to Art. 15 a of the [Federal Constitutional Law](#)).

**Compulsory schooling** in Austria lasts nine years. It extends to all children permanently residing in Austria regardless of their nationality. Compulsory schooling begins on 1 September following the child's sixth birthday.

The **Primary School** (*Grundschule or Volksschule*) is charged with imparting basic education for all. The social integration of children with disabilities is to be taken into account. The lower level I of Primary School includes years 1 and 2, and also the pre-school stage if necessary. The upper level II consists of years 3 and 4. Unlike Kindergarten, the pre-school year is part of the school system and is designed to foster the development of children of compulsory schooling age who are not yet mature enough to attend primary school proper.

The **Special School** (*Sonderschule*) may be attended during the entire period of compulsory schooling (age 6 to 15) and consists of levels I and II, as well as an upper-cycle form. Pupils/students with special educational needs may be educated either in Inclusive Classes at Primary Schools, Hauptschule or New Secondary School (general secondary school) or the lower cycle of Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule (Academic Secondary School) or in a Special School geared to their disablement.

In **secondary stage I** (years 5 to 8) a first differentiation takes place at the organisational level comprising the following school types:

- **General Secondary School** (*Hauptschule*)
- **New Secondary School** (*Neue Mittelschule*)
- **Academic Secondary School, lower cycle** (*Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule*)

In **secondary stage II** (years 9 to 13) a further differentiation takes place depending on students' talents and interests:

- **Pre-Vocational School** (*Polytechnische Schule*); is used as ninth school year by those students aged 14-15 who aim to enter working life as soon as they have completed compulsory schooling.
- **Part-Time Compulsory Vocational School** (*Berufsschule*), years 10 to 13 at maximum - parallel to in-company vocational training ("dual system").
- A requirement for starting **apprenticeship training** is completion of nine years of compulsory schooling; apprentices are at least 15 years old.
- **Medium Level Technical and Vocational Schools** (*Berufsbildende mittlere Schulen*), years 9 to 12 at maximum.
- **Higher Level Technical and Vocational Schools** (*Berufsbildende höhere Schulen*), years 9 to 13.
- **Academic Secondary School, upper cycle** (*Oberstufe der Allgemeinbildenden höheren Schule*), years 9 to 12.
- In addition to the eight-year type of academic secondary school, there is the "**Oberstufenrealgymnasium**", which is a separate type of upper level Academic Secondary School (years 9 to 12; entered on completion of eight years of general education).
- **Training Schools for Educators and for Nursery School Teachers** (*Bildungsanstalten für Sozialpädagogik and Bildungsanstalten für Kindergartenpädagogik*), years 9 to 13.
- Schools and other training programmes for **Health Professions**.

## Higher education

**Tertiary education** is offered at:

- **Universities** (*Universitäten*), Public and Private after accreditation.
- **Universities of Applied Sciences** (*Fachhochschulen*), after accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschule-*) study programmes.
- The **Krems University of Continuing Education** (= Danube University Krems, *Donau-Universität Krems*).
- **University Colleges of Teacher Education** (*Padagogische Hochschulen*).
- **Colleges for Higher-Level Paramedical Professions and Midwifery Colleges** (*Medizinisch-technische Akademien und Hebammenakademien*); have all been transformed into Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*); bachelor study programmes, except for two private paramedical academies.
- Moreover, there are a number of educational institutions which offer **University-Type Study Programmes**.

## Legislation References

[Basic Federal Act governing Berufsschulen for Agriculture and Forestry - as amended](#)

[Compulsory Schooling Act 1985 - as amended](#)

[Industrial Code 1994 - as amended](#)

[Industrial Constitution - as amended](#)

[Provincial Kindergarten Education Act \(of the 9 provinces\) - as amended](#)

[Vocational Training Act - as amended](#)

[University Act 2002 - as amended](#)

[Youth Welfare Act 1989 - as amended](#)