Curricula, Subjects Taught and Number of Hours

The curricula of part-time vocational schools (years 10 to max. 13), secondary technical and vocational schools (years 10 to 12) and colleges for higher vocational education (years 10 to 13) comprise information on general educational objectives and didactic principles, as well as details about teaching principles, school subjects and the timetable.

According to the School Organisation Act, a general education and a business-related section as well as occupation-related theory and occupation-related practice are foreseen at part-time vocational schools. Occupation-related practice classes are required because not all items of the training regulation can be covered in some small and medium-sized companies.

Since the curricula of the 203 apprenticeship occupations (as of 2019) differ in terms of optional subjects and exercises, a summary is given of those subjects which are found in all curricula:

- Compulsory subjects:
  - religious instruction,
  - German and communication,
  - an occupation-specific foreign language,
  - citizenship education,
  - business studies, and
  - theoretical and practical subjects required for the respective apprenticeship.
- Optional subjects:
  - religious instruction,
  - a modern foreign language,
  - German and
  - applied mathematics
- Optional exercises:
  - physical education and sport,
  - applied computer science.

The number of lessons depends on the duration of the apprenticeship training. It can last two, three, three-and-a-half or four years:

- For two-year apprenticeships, 800 or 840 lessons are taught altogether;
- For three-year apprenticeships, 1,200 or 1,260 lessons are taught altogether (not including religious instruction) – 3 years with at least 360 lessons each;
- For three-and-a-half-year apprenticeships, there are 1,380 or 1,440 lessons; in “high-tech”
occupations 1,560 lessons (excluding religious instruction), of which in the first, second and third years a minimum of 360 each and in the fourth a minimum of 180 lessons.

- For four-year apprenticeships there are 1,620 lessons altogether.

Interested pupils can be supported in their preparation for the general higher education entrance examination [3] (Berufsreifeprüfung) by taking in-depth classes in the subjects relevant to the Berufsreifeprüfung (German, English, mathematics, specialist area).

The curricula of secondary technical and vocational schools [4] and colleges for higher vocational education [5] comprise general compulsory subjects, compulsory subjects for the in-depth area/training focuses selected under school autonomy, optional subjects and a mandatory work placement. Secondary technical and vocational schools last between one and four years, colleges for higher vocational education comprise a training period of five years.

For all school types in vocational upper secondary education new curricula have already been developed. The new design of curricula is characterised by a division into semesters (splitting of syllabi over semesters) and competence areas (competence-oriented formulation).

The number of lessons, particularly at schools of engineering and crafts and at schools of agriculture, is up to 35 weekly lessons per school year for secondary technical and vocational schools and up to 38 weekly lessons per school year for colleges for higher vocational education.

The mandatory work placement takes place in relevant companies during the summer holidays. There is remuneration for work placements (which is not standardised due to the lack of collective agreement regulations). Completion of these mandatory work placements forms the prerequisite for admission to the final examination or matriculation and diploma examination.

In the following there is an overview of the teaching duration of the two school types and their training focuses. The number of weekly lessons is a guide value. In certain areas, both school types can design the compulsory subjects autonomously, e.g. by changing the distribution of weekly lessons among the individual classes, reducing weekly lessons or specifying a modern foreign language other than English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School type and training focus</th>
<th>Duration in school years</th>
<th>Number of weekly lessons</th>
<th>Duration of the mandatory work placement in weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary technical and vocational schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of engineering</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>at least 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of tourism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of management and service industries</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>optionally 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of business administration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>no time indicated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The different subjects taught at part-time vocational school [1], secondary technical and vocational schools [4] as well as colleges for higher vocational education [5] naturally entail a diversity of methods, like exercises, presentations, group work, talks and much more. The teacher is responsible for selecting the respective teaching method (freedom of choice of methods). However, he/she is obliged to teach appropriately to the various age groups, in a subject-related and illustrative way. This also applies to secondary technical and vocational schools and colleges for higher vocational education. Project-oriented and interdisciplinary forms of teaching aim to promote holistic networked thinking.

More than two thirds of education at part-time vocational schools relates to general education (citizenship education, German and communication, an occupation-specific foreign language, etc.), business studies and occupation-related theory. No more than one third is held at very well equipped workshops, supplementing practical training at the company.

In secondary technical and vocational schools as well as colleges for higher vocational education about 50% of instruction in occupation-related theory is held at laboratories and in specially equipped rooms (IT, practice firm). For occupation-related practice, schools are equipped with workshops, training kitchens, etc. Despite high costs, these training facilities at the school location have proven more efficient than outsourced facilities. Both theory and practice are taught by teachers with business practice.

Innovative teaching methods are applied in secondary technical and vocational schools as well as colleges for higher vocational education. These are:

- **Project-specific, interdisciplinary forms**

  This type of teaching method is increasingly used to promote holistic networked thinking and integrated, holistic learning. In the final years of colleges of engineering, of agriculture and forestry, and of schools of fashion, (teams of) pupils work on comprehensive diploma or project papers. Here they need to work on a topic from their specialist area, from the planning stage onto
necessary calculations and construction, to production. The preparation of a diploma paper with a business-related topic in the form of teamwork or individual work is also a key element of the training at schools and colleges of business administration, but also at colleges of management and service industries, as well as colleges of tourism. All these projects are carried out in close cooperation with or on the order of (regional) business.

- **Practice firm concept**

This concept is integrated into the curricula of commercial and business-oriented programmes and of colleges of agriculture and forestry. Practice firms have also been set up in other school types on a voluntary basis or in the form of an autonomous compulsory subject of schools. Practice firms aim to simulate work processes in companies as close to reality as possible. Like real businesses, each practice firm is organised in departments such as personnel, secretarial services, marketing, sales, controlling, auditing, accounts, logistics, etc. The trainees rotate jobs in the various departments, where they carry out the specific tasks.

Different knowledge and skills are applied in an integrative way. The main training objective in practice firms is to teach in-company processes and external business relationships on a sound basis by using the latest communication technologies. By participating in international practice firm networks and cooperating in international practice firm fairs, the trainees become familiar with different business cultures. The trainees act like responsible managers and staff and develop entrepreneurial spirit. More than 70% of practice firms have real-life partners in the economy.

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[1] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-1_en#glyB6