

05 Schools of business and colleges of business administration

Business-oriented training at upper secondary level

Schools and colleges of occupations in the business sector are run at a total of 118 locations throughout Austria and are characterised by relatively equal standards of education and training in the core area of the programmes. With business administration, foreign languages, general education, information and communication technologies, and key qualifications as the pillars of their programmes, they see themselves as **competence centres of the business sphere**. They include practice-oriented forms of learning and teaching of values and a sense of responsibility.

The **college of business administration**, which is completed with a matriculation and diploma examination after five years, provides comprehensive general education and advanced business-oriented training in an integrated form.

The school of business

– in a similar way to the college of business administration – provides general education and business-oriented training in an integrated and practical manner geared to the respective profession. Following school attendance of three years, students take a final examination.

The add-on course

is offered for graduates of schools of business and leads to the matriculation and diploma examination in six semesters.

The post-secondary VET course

can be attended by graduates of a matriculation exam of an academic secondary school or of a matriculation and diploma exam of a non-business-oriented VET school as an additional post-secondary qualification. It lasts for four semesters and is completed with a diploma exam.

For people in employment

both post-secondary VET courses and colleges of business administration are also run as **courses for people in employment**; at some locations these school types are additionally offered as distance learning courses for people in employment, comprising classes at school (social phase) and independent learning of a part of the syllabus (individual phase).

Both at the school of business and in the add-on course as well as at the college of business administration, students have to complete a **compulsory work placement** at a company, most appropriately before the final year.

College of business administration

Colleges of business administration prepare graduates for exercising advanced qualified occupations in all sectors of the economy (trade, commerce, industry, etc.)

and administration. In addition, they enable graduates to work on a self-employed basis.

- Of major importance is a comprehensive **entrepreneurship education**, which qualifies pupils as active and responsible entrepreneurs, employees and consumers in order to help shape the economy and society.
- Advanced specialist training programmes are offered in the form of **training focuses**, which schools can select or even create themselves according to school autonomy provisions. The **curriculum** – oriented towards learning outcomes based on relevant education standards and competence grids – is structured into **clusters**: Personality and Educational Career, Languages and Communication, Entrepreneurship – Business and Management, Society and Culture, Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

Business education, the Entrepreneurship – Business and Management cluster, comprises the following subjects: Business Administration (main subject), Corporate Accounting, Business Informatics, Office Management and Applied Informatics, Economics, Law; Business Training, Project Management, Practice Firm, Case Studies; and the special training focus.

- In these subjects, students are taught **subject-related theoretical and practical knowledge and skills** as well as **management skills** by using state-of-the-art information and communication technologies, which they can apply immediately in the business sphere.
- In their final year, pupils prepare a **diploma project** of pre-scientific character on a business-related topic commissioned by companies or business partners. They gather practical experiences in the compulsory work placement and the work in the practice firm.
- Pupils reach the linguistic level of B1 or B2 respectively according to GER in at least two **modern foreign languages**, enabling them to use these languages both in everyday situations and in business contexts, with a particular emphasis on practice-oriented language learning.

In the field of **general education**, essential knowledge of cultural, social, and scientific issues is imparted, taking into account the students' personal development at the same time, in order to train them to become independent, responsible individuals with a successful professional career and private life (cluster: Personality and Educational Career). In all subjects, particular emphasis is placed on the development of **specialist and cross-curricular skills and competences** to enable graduates to meet the demands of their future professional activity and personal environment.

The integration of general as well as technical and vocational education (**double qualification**) enables **graduates of colleges of business administration** to engage in business-oriented activities at executive level in all sectors of business and administration and gives them access to tertiary educational establishments (universities, *Fachhochschulen*, etc.).

Special forms of colleges of business administration are the college of business administration for **business informatics** and the post-secondary VET course for **business informatics** (digital business) at the college of business administration, where an in-depth ICT specialisation is combined with the colleges' highly recognised business education.

School of business

The school of business is characterised by special **practice-oriented training**: This allows graduates to acquire not only specialist competence (the knowledge and skills required to solve business-related problems) but also key qualifications (personal and social competences such as communication and presentation skills, teamwork, conflict management skills, etc.) that are decisive for tackling professional challenges successfully.

The curriculum of the **school of business** also combines subjects into **clusters**: Linguistic Competence, Social Competence and Personal Development, Business Competence, as well as Society and Environment. The clusters complement one another in content and topics and facilitate the development of cross-curricular competences. Within the clusters, schools have the autonomy to introduce changes.

The school of business therefore sees itself as a place where pupils **train the competences** required for practice, **develop entrepreneurship** and, in this way, **recognise their opportunities in the labour market, use them and make a successful start** to their **professional future**:

- reduction of theoretical knowledge and strengthening of practical application,
- orientation towards learning outcomes based on relevant educational standards and competence grids,
- forms of learning and teaching which activate students,
- acquisition of practice-oriented business competence in school-based practice firms with involvement of business partners and with the work placement,
- the option of a combined all-day form with learning support,
- adaptation of the school organisation to the intentions laid down in the curriculum.

Practice-oriented training is of special importance for schools of business and is also included in the educational mission laid down for all subjects.

- This is underlined by the operation of **practice firms** as training locations for entrepreneurial thinking and acting: The practice firm is where competence- and practice-oriented teaching is in line with the business-oriented educational objective. References to practice firms are included in all subjects.
- All students prepare and work on a business-related **project/final work**, usually in teams, in which

project management methods are applied. Required tasks range from finding topics and planning, organisation and implementation, to documentation and presentation. These projects and final works are carried out on behalf of companies or business partners.

- **Compulsory work placement**: The curriculum of the school of business requires students to complete a compulsory work placement and keep a practice portfolio (which is noted in the final certificate).

Career opportunities

Dependent employment

Graduates of schools of business and colleges of business administration are qualified to engage in business-oriented and administrative activities at intermediate and executive level in all sectors of business and administration. As far as employment and social insurance regulations are concerned, the matriculation and diploma certificate obtained at a college of business administration as well as the final certificate acquired at a school of business are recognised as equivalent to proof of completion of an initial vocational training programme in the respective field, thus providing the entitlements granted to holders of a certificate of apprenticeship.

Self-employment

Graduates of colleges of business administration can engage in an **independent professional activity** in a non-regulated craft or trade immediately after the matriculation and diploma exam, graduates of schools of business can do so immediately after completing their final examination. For regulated trades, job-specific work experience of differing duration and a professional diploma examination are required.

Graduates of schools of business and colleges of business administration are granted exemption from the **entrepreneurial examination** required for a self-employed activity.

Specific features

Schools of business and colleges of business administration are characterised by the following distinguishing features:

- **Spiral curriculum**: Key contents are covered repeatedly in the course of the training with an increasing level of detail and level of complexity.
- **Entrepreneurship education**: Entrepreneurial thinking and acting constitutes an integral part of all subjects. All schools of business and colleges of business administration aim to teach standardised core competences in business and general fields.

- **Practice-oriented training at practice firms**
A practice firm is a virtual enterprise that is active on the national and international practice firm market and deals with all business situations that also come up in a real company. Students rotate jobs in the various departments. The premises called *BWZs*, where practice firms operate above all, are equipped with all state-of-the-art office, information and communication technologies like real offices.

- **Cooperative open learning**
Many locations offer forms of cooperative open learning which aim to teach students to work in an increasingly independent and responsible way.
- **Diversification due to special focuses**
Special focuses are extension areas which are selected autonomously by the school, take account of regional demands and are offered from the third year at colleges of business administration. Students select them from their school's available courses in accordance with their interests.

Locations	Pupils
118	51,576

Source: BMBF Zahlenspiegel 2013, school year 2012/2013