

The scholastic option

Studying even harder and doing even more homework

Young people who attend an upper-secondary baccalaureate or specialised school in Switzerland like studying. They are both willing and able to study even harder, to learn even more than they did during compulsory education. They have no problems spending two or even three hours per day doing homework. They already performed well during compulsory education, which increased their chances of being admitted to a baccalaureate school or a specialised school. At lower-secondary school, they were streamed to the high performance group, obtained good grades – at least 4.5 – in most subjects and have a broad range of interests.

Criteria for pursuing the scholastic option:

- You enjoy going to school and want to learn a lot more.
- You like interacting on a day-to-day basis with people of the same age.
- You are interested in many different topics and subjects, and you enjoy delving into subject matter (deepening your knowledge).
- You are willing to spend the next few years studying even more than you did during compulsory education.
- You have clear career plans that can be furthered by attending a specialised school.
- You are already performing well at school, have been streamed to the high-performance group at lower-secondary school, and you have a high grade point average.
- Your teachers feel that you have the scholastic aptitudes needed to attend a baccalaureate school or a specialised school.

Meetings and tests with guidance counsellors

Vocational education and career guidance counsellors can help you to make the choice that is right for you. They can help you find the right type of school or to choose from among the various transitional options between lower-secondary and upper-secondary school. Contact a regional guidance counselling office or schedule an appointment to meet a guidance counsellor at your school. This will give you the chance to assess your interests and skills, with tests conducted upon requests. You can also discuss decisions with your guidance counsellor, weigh the various alternatives, get tips on how to apply and plan your next steps.

Finding the right school

All cantons offer many different schools. You can attend information events or open-house days to find out if the lessons, atmosphere and classmates match your expectations. More information about upper-secondary schools can be found on the website of your canton's Department of Education and Training (click here for complete list).

The following scholastic options are available upon completion of lower-secondary school:

Baccalaureate schools

In baccalaureate schools, you will attend a number of mandatory core subjects. Each student is also asked to choose a primary and secondary specialism. This determines your study profile and the direction of studies both at upper-secondary and potentially also at university. In the German-speaking region of Switzerland, you may choose from a range of different profiles. Make sure to choose a baccalaureate school that offers a profile that you are interested in; you need to register for one of these profiles. More information about the various

baccalaureate profiles can be found on the website of your canton's Department of Education and Training. You can also attend information events to learn more.

Upper-secondary specialised schools (FMS)

Upper-secondary specialised schools provide a good foundation for challenging skills development in the following occupational fields:

- Healthcare/natural sciences
- Communication/media
- Pedagogy
- Social work
- Design/art
- Music/theatre/dance

More information about occupational fields offered by specialised schools can be found on the website of your canton's Department of Education and Training. You can also attend information events to learn more.

Full-time school-based VET programmes

Full-time schools offering vocational education and training (VET) in a number of different occupations can be found mainly in the French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland. In the German-speaking region, such vocational schools are generally limited to commerce and information technology.

Admission to upper-secondary schools

The transition from lower-secondary to upper-secondary level is handled differently in each canton. More information about admission to upper-secondary schools can be found on the website of your canton's Department of Education and Training or on the websites of individual schools. You can also obtain more detailed information from the responsible teacher at lower-secondary school as well as from a guidance counsellor.

Personal preparation

Most young people wishing to enrol in a specialised school start preparing for the transition as early as in the second year of lower-secondary school. They need good grades, especially in the main subjects.

Where entry into specialised schools is contingent on passing an admissions test, many lower-secondary school teachers provide their students with admissions tests from previous years so that they can practice. You can also find these tests on the websites of the specialised schools in your canton or on the website of your canton's Department of Education and Training.

In many communes, lower-secondary schools also offer free preparatory after-school courses for admissions tests. Contact the responsible teacher for more information.

There are also many private institutions that offer courses to prepare pupils for admissions tests.

Trial periods

In many cantons, there is a trial period after admission to a baccalaureate school (2 to 3 months or in some cases a full semester), and in some cases there is also a minimum grade average required after each full school year for a student to be admitted to the baccalaureate examination, 3-4 years down the road.