

# Dual-track VET

Berufslehre / Apprentissage / Tirocinio

 Switzerland

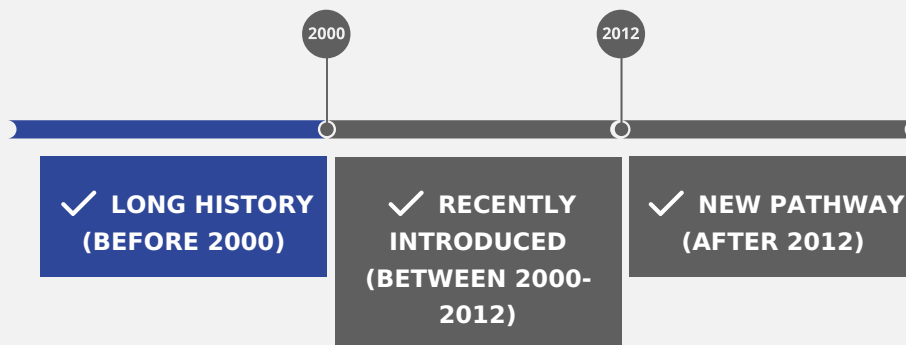
## Reference year 2023

### Content updates and contributors

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## ① SCHEME HISTORY

### Q1. When was the scheme introduced?



The first Federal Vocational Education and Training Act came into force in 1933, which established the combined school and work-based model for upper-secondary level VET programmes. The current model is regulated by the VPETA since 2004.

### Q2. How did the apprenticeship scheme originate?



✓ TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP (MASTER-APPRENTICE RELATION) TO PREPARE APPRENTICES FOR THE OCCUPATION



✓ SCHOOL-BASED VET TRACK BY INCLUDING MORE WORK-BASED LEARNING TO SUPPLY SKILLED WORKFORCE TO MATCH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS



✓ EX-NOVO



✓ OTHER

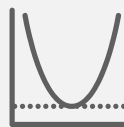
Professional associations have been the driving force behind the development and institutionalisation of apprenticeship.

## 2 BENEFICIARIES

**Q3. Does the legal basis define the minimum and maximum age limits for enrolment of the target group of this scheme?**



✓ MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM AGE LIMITS DEFINED



✓ MINIMUM AGE LIMITS DEFINED ONLY

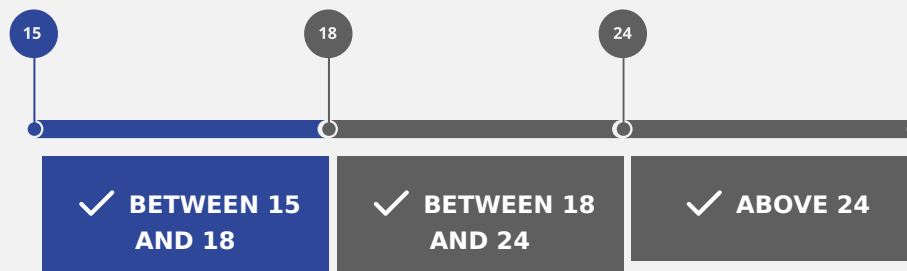


✓ OTHER

There is no specific mention of a minimum age limit in the laws and national regulations for apprenticeships. However, apprenticeship contract being work contract, these cannot create stable work obligations for persons below 15 years old.

On exceptional basis, the Canton may authorise a 14-year-old person that is free from compulsory schooling to enter an apprenticeship programme (Art.9 Ordinance 5 on the

#### Q4. What is the average age of learners in practice?



According to the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS), in the Swiss active population, the highest rate of apprentices is at the age of 18. Amongst the 215,581 apprentices in 2021-22, 74.3% were 19 years-old or younger (Swiss Statistical Office, 2022: Education and science Pupils and Students Upper secondary level Vocational education and training (VET) – Apprenticeships)

#### Q5. How many learners are enrolled in this scheme?

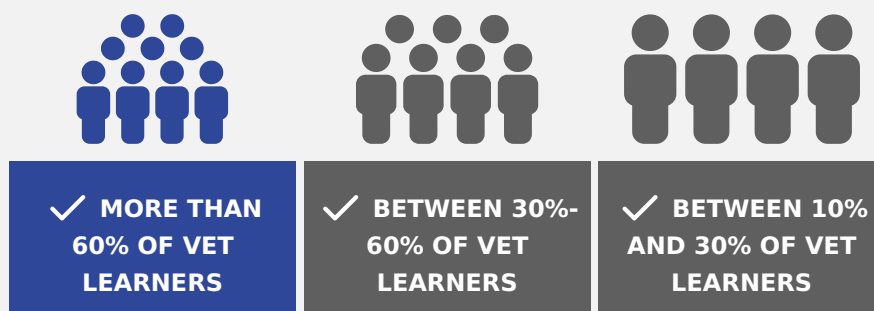
Amongst the 218,259 students enrolled in VET in 2020, 90,6% (197,782) are apprentices in the Dual-track VET.

Source: SERI, Facts and Figures VPET, 2022, and Swiss Federal Office, data available on demand

In the year 2021-22, there were 75,307 new first enrolments in initial VET (excluded are the case of contract extension or new contract within the first year of apprenticeship). This includes 67,377 for VET Diplomas and 7,930 for VET Certificate programmes.

Source: Swiss Statistical Office, 2022: Education and science Pupils and Students Upper secondary level Vocational education and training (VET) – Apprenticeships

#### Q6. What is the share of apprentices enrolled in this scheme in relation to all VET students for the corresponding educational level(s)?





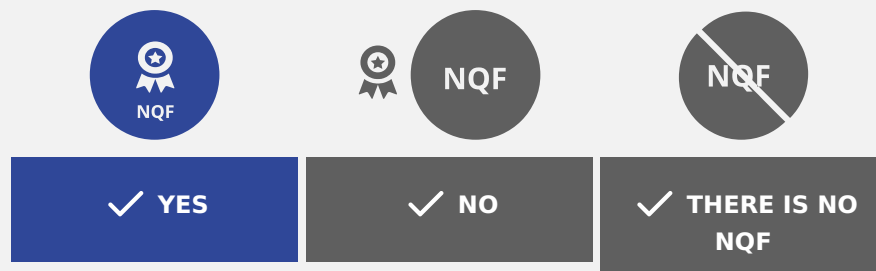
✓ LESS THAN  
10% OF VET  
LEARNERS

Amongst the 218,259 students enrolled in VET in 2020, 90,6% (197,782) are apprentices in the Dual-track VET.

Source: SERI, Facts and Figures VPET, 2022, and Swiss Federal Office, data available on demand

### 3 QUALIFICATIONS

**Q7. Are the qualifications included in the National Qualification Framework (NQF)?**

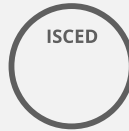


The 2-year VET Certificate is considered at level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework for Vocational and Professional Qualifications (NQF VPQ).

The 3- or 4-year VET diploma are generally referenced at level 4 or 5 depending on the programme.

Each VET programme has gone through a referencing process to the framework available here in national languages: [SR 412.105.12 - Verordnung des SBFI vom 11. Mai 2015 über das Verzeichnis der gemäss dem nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen für Abschlüsse der Berufsbildung eingestufteten Berufsbildungsabschlüsse \(admin.ch\)](#)

**Q8. Is the scheme included in the ISCED 2011 mapping?**



✓ YES

✓ NO

Level 35

Source: [International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED 2011\) - Korrigierte Version 15.05.2019](#) | Publication | Office fédéral de la statistique (admin.ch)

### Q9. Are the qualifications offered only through apprenticeships?



✓ QUALIFICATIONS CAN ONLY BE OBTAINED THROUGH THIS APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

✓ THE SAME QUALIFICATIONS CAN BE ACHIEVED ALSO THROUGH OTHER SCHEMES (I.E. SCHOOL-BASED VET)

Although school-based VET programmes represent less than 10% of all VET programmes, they lead to the same qualifications.

### Q10. Which is the type of qualification obtained through the apprenticeship scheme?



✓ FORMAL VET QUALIFICATION (WHICH DOES NOT INDICATE THE PATHWAY)

✓ FORMAL VET QUALIFICATION (WHICH INDICATES THE PATHWAY)

✓ FORMAL APPRENTICESHIP QUALIFICATION (JOURNEYMAN, ETC.)



✓ OTHERS

The name of the training company or institution is stated in the diploma, indicating whether the programme was a school-based or dual-track.

### Q11. Does the scheme provide direct access to higher education?



✓ YES



✓ NO

Graduates of the 2-year VET programme may enrol directly in a 3-year or 4-year VET programme leading to the Federal VET Diploma but not directly to higher education.

3-year or 4-year VET programmes provide graduates with an open access to tertiary-level professional education and training (PET), including in Professional Education Colleges and Federal Examinations (some additional work experience might be required).

Apprentices also have the option of preparing for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) examination either during their apprenticeship or after graduation. This preparatory course covers general education subjects and those who pass the FVB examination may enrol in a Swiss university of applied sciences (UAS) without having to take an entrance examination.

Moreover, holders of the FVB can prepare for the University Aptitude Test (UAT), which opens the way for enrolment Academic Bachelor programmes in a cantonal university or federal institute of technology. The FVB can only be obtained in combination with a VET qualification.

### Q12. What is the typical duration of the apprenticeship programme?

3 or 4 years

The shortest duration is 2 years, which lead to a Federal VET Certificate, while the longest is 4 years and leads to a Federal VET Diploma.

**Q13. Is there any organization at the national level with roles in co-ordinating the scheme?**



At national level, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is the coordinating body for VET.

Since January 2021, a new governance structure has been built. It is organised as follows:

- At policy level: The National VPET Summit intends to legitimise the strategic direction of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) through partnership and to build the necessary consensus by setting guidelines and priorities.

The VPET Summit participants are from the Federal State, the Employers' and Workers' organisations as well as from the Cantons:

- o the Head of Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research;
- o a representative of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI);
- o on the employers' side: the presidents or directors of the Swiss Employers' Association (SAV/UPS) and the Swiss Union of Arts and Crafts (SGV/USAM);
- o on the workers', the Swiss Union of Trade Unions (SGB/USS) and Travail.Suisse;
- o the president and the secretary general of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK/CDIP)

Each are accompanied by their representative in the Tripartite VPET Conference.

- At strategic level: The Tripartite VPET Conference steers VPET at a strategic level and ensures its development on the basis of partnership. The Tripartite VPET Conference prepares the National Summit and ensures that the decisions taken there are implemented in accordance with the respective legal responsibilities. It discusses issues at the operational level and works towards solutions at the strategic level. It can set up expert groups and initiate projects. It can also invite external persons and exchange with other organisations or bodies.

The same institutions as for the Summit are represented in the Conference, except for the Federal Government, which is represented only by SERI in the Conference.

- At operational level: as main areas of work attached to the Conference there are 3 parts including: Dialogue Forums, Expert Groups and Project groups.

For each VET programme, a Swiss committee for occupation development and quality (CODQ) is established to develop the programme and improve its quality.

**Q14. What is the role of chambers, employers' and employees' representatives, sectoral councils (if existent), in shaping apprenticeship content, as per regulation?**



✓ ROLE IN  
DESIGNING  
QUALIFICATION



✓ ROLE IN  
DESIGNING  
CURRICULA



✓ OTHER



✓ NO ROLE

The first article of the VPET Act establishes a joint responsibility amongst the Confederation, the Cantons and professional organisations for governing and implementing VET.

Employers' and workers' representatives are involved in all levels of governance: the National VPET Summit, the Tripartite VPET Conference, the Dialogue Forums, the Expert Groups and Project groups (see Q13).

Each of the Swiss committees for occupation development and quality (CODQ, see also Q13) are led by professional organisation and must have representatives of federal and cantonal states, from employer's and employees' organisations as well as balanced linguistic representation.

**Q15. What is the role of chambers, employers' and employees' representatives in implementing the apprenticeship scheme, as per regulation?**



✓ ROLE IN FINAL  
ASSESSMENT OF  
APPRENTICES



✓ ROLE IN  
ACCREDITATION OF  
COMPANIES



✓ ROLE IN  
MONITORING OF  
THE IN-COMPANY  
TRAINING



✓ OTHER

✓ NO ROLE

At implementation level, the main contributions of professional associations refer to:

- the organisation of branch courses (also referred to as “intercompany courses”) as well as
- the final assessment procedure.

Depending on the sector, trade associations may manage funds for VPET.

Main professional associations also develop a standard methodological handbook, which gives precise information on how apprenticeship training should take place within the host company.

Professional associations also provide assistance to companies for administrative matters and also carry out marketing activities to promote apprenticeship in their sector.

#### **Q16. What are the main roles of key state actors?**

At federal level, SERI is the authority regulating and co-funding the VET and PET sectors.

The cantons are responsible for enforcing the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training. They oversee apprenticeship contracts and vocational schools, and provide vocational, educational and career guidance. They also issue accreditation (authorisation) to companies participating in apprenticeships. They finance up to 75% of the public expenditure.

The Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET) is the governmental expert organisation for vocational education and training. It offers tertiary-level basic and continuing training to VET professionals, conducts VET research, contributes to the development of occupations and supports international cooperation in VET.

## ⑤ TRAINING AT THE WORKPLACE

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**Q17. Is it compulsory to alternate training between two learning venues (school and company)?**



✓ YES

✓ NO

Yes. The exact number of days to be spent in school, in company and in branch courses is defined in the VET Ordinance for each VET programme issued by SERI (see Q21) and in the corresponding national training plan.

**Q18. Is the in-company training defined as minimum share of the apprenticeship scheme duration?**



✓ YES,  
EQUIVALENT OR  
MORE THAN 50%  
OF SCHEME  
DURATION



✓ YES, BETWEEN  
20% AND 50% OF  
THE SCHEME  
DURATION



✓ YES, LESS  
THAN 20% OF THE  
SCHEME DURATION



✓ NO, NO  
MINIMUM SHARE IS  
COMPULSORY

The in-company training share is in general 3 to 4 days per week but may change throughout the programme duration. It also depends on whether the apprentice is taking the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) examination during their apprenticeship, which requires more time for the school-based component.

**Q19. Is there a distinction between the training time and working time for the period spent at workplace, as per regulation?**



✓ YES, THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK MAKES THIS DISTINCTION

✓ NO, THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK MAKES NO DISTINCTION

**Q20. What is the form of alternation of training between workplace (company) and school?**



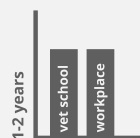
✓ EVERY WEEK INCLUDES BOTH VENUES



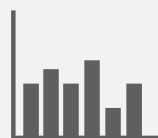
✓ ONE OR MORE WEEKS (LESS THAN 1 MONTH) SPENT AT SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY ONE OR MORE WEEKS AT WORKPLACE



✓ ONE OR MORE MONTHS (LESS THAN 1 YEAR) SPENT AT SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY ONE OR MORE MONTHS AT WORKPLACE



✓ A LONGER PERIOD (1-2 YEARS) SPENT AT SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY A LONGER PERIOD SPENT TRAINING AT WORKPLACE



✓ VARIOUS - DEPENDS ON AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE COMPANY



✓ OTHER

  
 **NOT SPECIFIED**

The most common form of alternation is 3 to 4 days in company and 1 to 2 days at school. With a few blocks of branch courses that vary from the first year to the next and from one programme to another.

A few VET programmes have longer alternating blocks adapted to the seasonality of given professions (in hospitality and agriculture).


The alternation ratio, structure and duration for each programme is set in the corresponding VET Ordinance issued by SERI (see Q21).

### Q21. What is the basis for the training offered?



 **THE SCHEME IS IMPLEMENTED VIA A SPECIFIC APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME**



 **THE SCHEME IS IMPLEMENTED ON THE BASIS OF THE SCHOOL-BASED VET PROGRAMME**



 **THE SCHEME IS IMPLEMENTED BASED ON THE VET STANDARDS (VALID GENERALLY FOR ALL VET SCHEMES)**



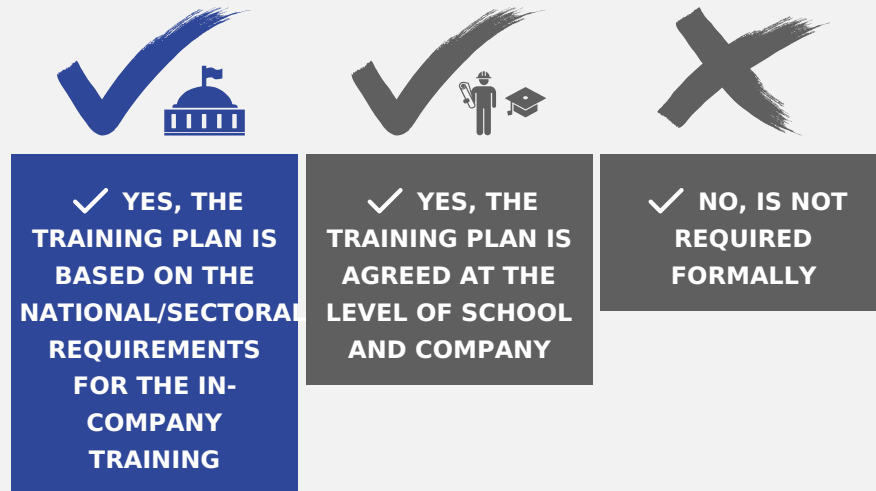
 **OTHER**

Each VET programme in Switzerland has its legal basis in a national VET ordinance issued by SERI. VET Ordinances are prepared through the joint efforts of the Confederation, the Cantons and the relevant professional organisations. They cover the legally relevant aspects applying to a given occupation: they define the occupational profile, duration, objectives and requirement of workplace training and school instruction, the distribution across learning location, the criteria that qualified workers in the occupation must meet, and qualification procedures. (VPETA art.19)

Each Ordinance is accompanied by a national Training Plan dedicated to each VET programme. The National training plans define not only the technical but also social and personal skills a student must acquire, the content of education (lessons at vocational

schools, range of practical skills taught at the host company and content of branch courses) and specify the respective roles of the vocational school, the host company and the branch training centre in providing these competences. They also define the process of assessment.

**Q22. Is the company hosting apprentices required by regulation to follow a training plan at the workplace?**



The VET ordinance and corresponding training plan for the given occupation are the framework for apprenticeship training. When planning the workplace training, the host company takes into account the subjects taught at the vocational school and at the branch training centre.

The in-company training plan itself, is organised at company level.

Several companies may work together and pool resources for apprenticeship training. If the VET programme takes place within the framework of a host company network, the main host company signs the apprenticeship contract with the learner. The main host company is responsible for all contractual obligations (Art. 16, para. 2, let. a VPETA; Art. 8 VPETO)

The partner companies in the host company network must agree to ensure systematic training and compliance with the training plan. The content and duration of each portion of apprenticeship training is established in a corresponding apprenticeship contract (Art. 14, para. 1 VPETO).

**Q23. What are the requirements on companies to provide placements, as per regulation?**



✓ HAVE TO  
PROVIDE A  
SUITABLE  
LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENT

✓ HAVE TO  
PROVIDE A MENTOR  
/ TUTOR / TRAINER

✓ OTHER

Art 20 VPETA indicates that the host company is responsible for the workplace training segment of VET programmes and shall strive to ensure that learners progress as much as possible and shall monitor learner progress periodically.

In order to receive the accreditation from the local authority (Cantonal Office VET), a host company must prove that they:

- are active in a field relevant to the training programme, and they can cover the practical training through their professional activities. If not, they may join a host-company network (see Q22), where they may cover only parts of the practical training.
- Have an employee which is a qualified professional with a trainer certificate (art 44, VPETO)
- provide a suitable learning environment

#### Q24. What are the formal requirements regarding workplace trainers/mentors/tutors? What is their profile?

Art 44 VPETO defines the minimum requirement for Workplace trainers in host companies. They must have:

- a Federal VET Diploma or equivalent qualification in the field in which they will be training others;
- two years of practical experience in the field in which they will be training others;
- a vocational pedagogy qualification equivalent to 100 learning hours.

Successful completion of a 40-hour course may be used instead of the learning hours mentioned in paragraph 1 letter c.

#### Q25. Are there any sanctions on companies that do not provide training to apprentices at the workplace?



✓ YES

✓ NO

In general, the participation in apprenticeships is voluntary for companies.

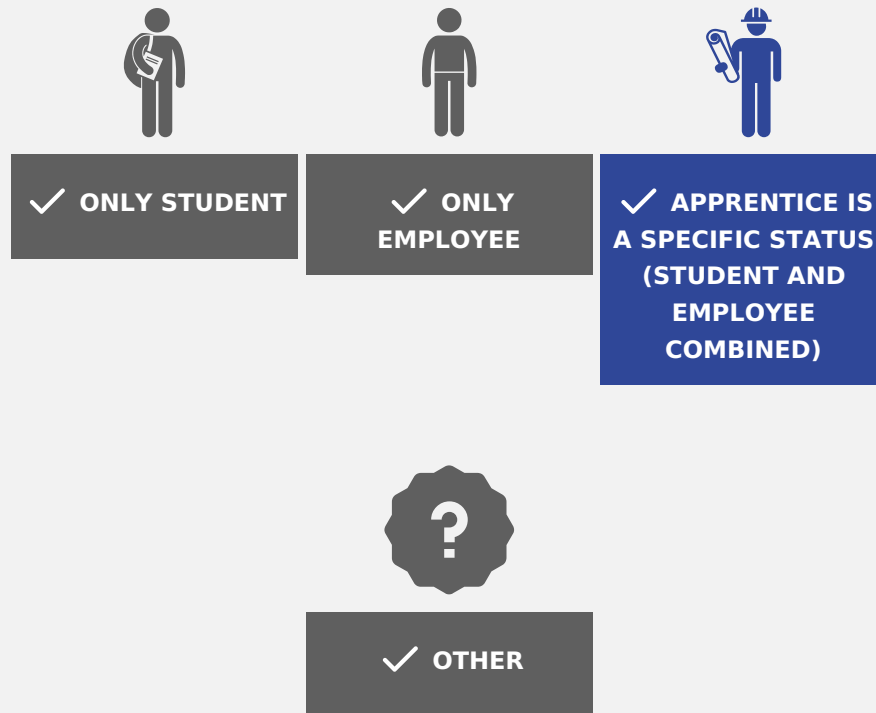
In some sectors where there are sectoral VPET funds, companies that do not train are obliged to pay a tax to contribute to the costs of vocational training in the sector.

In the health sector, in some cantons, there is an obligation to train. Institutions that do

not train sufficiently may be subject to fines.

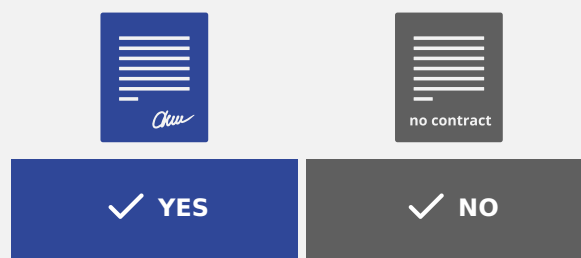
## 6 CONTRACT AND COMPENSATION

**Q26. What is the status of the learner?**



The apprentice is an employee with special rights and obligations as defined in the Special Individual Employment Contract of the Code of Obligations (Art. 344–346a)

**Q27. Is there any written arrangement between the learner and company, required as per regulation?**



Apprenticeship contracts are mandatory for formal dual-VET. The contract must stipulate the nature and duration of vocational training, the salary, the probation period, the working hours and vacation entitlements.

The contracting parties are the learner and the host company. The legal guardian's signature is required if the learner is under the age of 18.

The contracting parties shall use the standard contract forms provided to them by the Cantons. SERI shall ensure that the same contract forms are used throughout

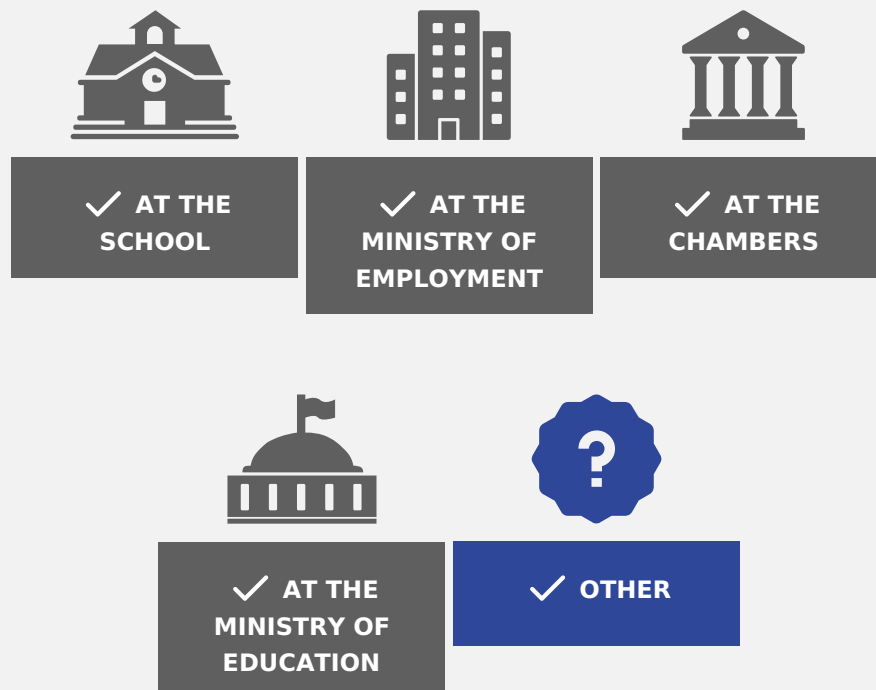
Switzerland (VPETO, art8). The standard apprenticeship contract form can be found here: [vpel.ch](http://vpel.ch) ([berufsbildung.ch](http://berufsbildung.ch))

### Q28. What is the nature of the written arrangement?



The apprenticeship contract is a Special Individual Employment Contract as defined in the Code of Obligations (Art. 344-346a)

### Q29. Where is the contract or the formal agreement registered?



Apprenticeship contracts must be signed and approved by the cantonal authorities prior to commencement of the first apprenticeship day (VPETA art 14, para.3).

### Q30. Do apprentices receive a wage or allowance?



✓ YES, ALL APPRENTICES RECEIVE A WAGE (TAXABLE INCOME)



✓ YES, ALL APPRENTICES RECEIVE AN ALLOWANCE (NOT A FORM OF TAXABLE INCOME)



✓ APPRENTICES RECEIVE A REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES



✓ NO FORM OF COMPENSATION IS FORESEEN BY LAW

There is no obligation for the employer to pay a wage to the apprentice. However, in practice, it is a common practice for the apprentices to receive a wage, set in the apprenticeship contract. The salary is to be paid by month and increases each year.

In certain occupations (e.g. hotels/restaurants/catering and agriculture) room and board provided by the host company are considered to be salary in kind.

Costs related to the mandatory attendance of the branch courses (travelling, accommodation and board) are to be paid by the host company for the apprentice.

The apprenticeship contract may also contain clauses concerning other services, e.g. the provision of tools and work clothes.

### Q31. How is the apprentice wage (taxable income) set?



✓ BY LAW (APPLYING FOR ALL)



✓ BY CROSS-SECTORAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AT NATIONAL OR LOCAL LEVEL



✓ BY SECTORAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AT NATIONAL OR LOCAL LEVEL



✓ BY FIRM-LEVEL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS OR INDIVIDUAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN APPRENTICE AND COMPANY

✓ OTHER

Apprentice salaries are not regulated at national level, but may be defined in collective labour agreements, standard employment contracts or trade association recommendations. These must be taken into account in establishing the apprenticeship contract.

In general, the wage of the apprentices varies between 10 and 20% of the salary of a qualified employee.

## 7 FINANCING AND INCENTIVES

**Q32. Who covers the cost of the wage or allowance of the apprentice?**



✓ EMPLOYERS



✓ STATE



✓ OTHER

**Q33. What are the sources of financing of the direct costs for the in-company training part of the apprenticeship scheme?**



✓ SINGLE EMPLOYERS HOSTING APPRENTICES



✓ TRAINING FUNDS



✓ STATE



✓ OTHER

In general, the company must bear the cost of the in-company training part of the apprenticeship, as well as the costs for the branch courses (see also Q31).

Professional association may create a VPET Fund. In those cases, all companies within a given economic branch are required to contribute to the fund, which is then used to cover the costs of activities within the VET sector and professional education sector: e.g. development of training programmes, organising courses and qualification procedures, promotion of specific occupations.

The Confederation may declare some VPET funds to be of general interest and therefore mandatory for all companies within a given economic branch. (VPETA art 60, para 3).

**Q34. Are there any financial incentives for companies that offer apprenticeship places?**



✓ YES, SUBSIDIES



✓ YES, TAX DEDUCTIONS



✓ YES, OTHER INCENTIVES



✓ NO FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

In general, there is no financial incentive for companies at national level. National seed funding for training alliances is an option for financial support. It includes a grant (max. CHF 50,000) for establishing the alliance and, thereafter, an additional CHF 5,000 for each newly created training position.

**Q35. Does the wage or allowance of the apprentice cover both the time spent at school and in the company?**



✓ YES



✓ NO, IT COVERS ONLY THE TIME SPENT IN THE COMPANY

Attendance of classes at the VET school, branch courses and optional courses as laid down by law and the taking of the final examination should under no circumstances result in a reduction in salary.

**Q36. Are there any incentives for learners?**



✓ YES, GRANTS PAID TO LEARNERS TO TOP UP THEIR REMUNERATION



✓ YES, GRANTS PAID TO LEARNERS RELATED TO OTHER COSTS (TRAVEL, FOOD ETC.)



✓ YES, RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING / FAST-TRACK OPPORTUNITIES



✓ YES, GUIDANCE  
OR LEARNER  
SUPPORT



✓ YES, OTHER  
TYPES OF  
INCENTIVES



✓ NO

In addition to the basic salary, the apprenticeship contract may also provide for other benefits from the host company, for example bonuses or various other payments (raises, payment of the cost of cleaning working clothes, transport, etc.) but also contributions for room and board (see also Q31).

“Fast-track apprenticeships” are possible for individuals or standardised at occupational for holders of previous qualifications especially for talented learners, learners who have already undergone relevant training (Art. 18 VPETA, Art. 8 VPETO).