

# Partly standardised competence-oriented final VET exam

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 AUSTRIA

## Timeline



ID number 27992

## Background

The final exam (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung*) at VET colleges consists of a written diploma thesis, a written examination and an oral examination. A successfully completed final exam grants the unrestricted right to study at universities and universities of applied sciences.

In the past, the written examination was prepared by the teachers of the respective schools themselves. Even if the curriculum and the examination regulation of the type of school had to be fulfilled, it could not be excluded that the level of requirements varied from school to school.

## Objectives

The following objectives are to be achieved with the standardised final exam:

- (a) uniform basic competences for all learners;
- (b) equal conditions for all learners;
- (c) competence orientation;
- (d) objectivity through standardised tasks and uniform assessment criteria;
- (e) comparability and transparency of school performance and qualifications;
- (f) increasing the informative value of final examinations;
- (g) ability to study;
- (h) European comparison of qualifications (EQF, NQF).

## Description

Following a pilot phase, Austria introduced partly centralised/standardised competence-oriented final exams at the end of upper secondary education. Key competences are included in the exams. Since 2015/16, competence-oriented final exams have been mainstreamed in VET programmes and in the *Berufsreifeprüfung* (the exam giving access to higher education for those VET graduates enrolled in programmes which did not automatically lead to it). Guidelines for the different training pathways and subjects, and for

the different forms of the exam (oral, written and, if applicable, project-related are published), are accessible to the public on the education ministry's website. Especially for the traditionally critical examination areas of mathematics and applied mathematics, various support structures have been set up for teachers and learners, some of which are also publicly accessible via the education ministry's website. In addition to in-service training for teachers and a help desk to assist with exam corrections, this includes, above all, an exercise pool to support teachers and learners in targeted preparation for the exams. This pool comprises examination examples from previous years and is publicly accessible. This also increases the transparency of the tasks.

This new regulation also applies to add-on VET programmes and VET college programmes aimed at adults with an IVET qualification and therefore classified as CVET.

#### **2015 Pilot**

#### **2016 Implementation**

#### **2019 Implementation**

Since 2019, the partly standardised competence-oriented final VET exam has been fully implemented in all programmes at upper secondary level and in the scheme of the *Berufsreifeprüfung*. Adaptations and further developments are possible at any time, but do not fundamentally interfere with the system or the policy.

#### **2020 Implementation**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only written examinations were conducted in 2020; oral examinations were omitted. Contrary to the usual practice, the report marks of the half-year report were also included in the overall assessments of the final exams. Learners had the right to take the oral examination voluntarily, for example to rectify a poor or negative result in the written examination or in the half-year report.

#### **2021 Implementation**

In 2021, there were several changes to the Matura programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the many distance learning phases. The start of the standardised written examinations was postponed by almost 3 weeks to allow the learners more preparation time. The presentation and discussion of the pre-scientific work or diploma theses took place voluntarily. Those learners who presented their work were allowed to do so virtually. The oral examinations were also voluntary and had limited scope. In awarding the Matura grades, the annual grade of the respective subject was also taken into account, as in 2020.

#### **2022 Implementation**

In the case of the partially standardised school-leaving examination, Covid-related adjustments were made in 2022, which represent deviations from the regular examination regulations. These include, among other things, additional preparation possibilities, extension of the examination duration, substitute dates in the case of absence due to illness, etc.

#### **2023 Implementation**

For the final exam of the school year 2022/23 the regulations set out in the regular legal provisions applied again. In addition, the regulations that were adopted into the regular school system during the pandemic were applicable. For example, the report marks of the half-year report are included in the overall assessments of the final exams.

#### **2024 Implementation**

In 2024, the pre-scientific work (*Vorwissenschaftliche Arbeit*) at academic secondary

schools (AHS) has been modified. Renamed final work (*abschließende Arbeit*, ABA) can now be carried out in the form of a research, creative, or artistic process (e.g. a multimedia product, a video report, a podcast, or a study) or be replaced with an additional written or oral examination. In the meantime, the diploma thesis at colleges for higher vocational education (BHS) remains unchanged, as it provides the opportunity to demonstrate profession-specific ways of thinking and acquired competences. It has a long and successful tradition and constitutes an important component for the categorisation of BHS qualifications to NQF level 5.

A new regulation came into force in July 2024 that learners at intermediate VET schools (three-to-four-year schools, NQF level 4) will no longer have to write a final paper.

### 2025 Implementation

In 2025, modifications have been made to the Matura assessment system. Since 2020, the annual grade in the final year of schooling has been included in the Matura grade. After this led to unintended effects (some learners had a positive annual grade but did not submit solutions to the Matura questions), the assessment rules were tightened. To have the annual grade accounted in the final grade, at least 30% of the assigned Matura tasks must be completed. Similar rules are being considered for the oral examinations.

## Bodies responsible

- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) (until 2025)
- Federal Ministry of Education (BMB)

## Target group

### Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

## Thematic categories

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

### Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

[General information of the Federal Ministry of Education on the standardised competence-oriented final exams](#)

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[Information of the Federal Ministry of Education on final exams at VET Colleges](#)

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[Standardised final examinations 2021](#)

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“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Partly standardised competence-oriented final VET exam: Austria. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/27992>