

Recognition of foreign certificates

If you are interested in finding work or pursuing skills development in Switzerland, the first step is to determine how well you are positioned on the labour market. You will need to find out if certificates and diplomas that you obtained outside of Switzerland match Swiss requirements.

Have you obtained a qualification in your home country (e.g. a diploma, certificate of completion or other certificate, a confirmation or attestation of some sort)? You may submit this qualification to the Swiss authorities for verification to find out how much it is "worth" in Switzerland.

This allows employers in Switzerland to better determine whether you are suitable for a given position. Obtaining recognition of your foreign certificates or diplomas does not guarantee you a job, but it certainly improves your employment prospects. At the same time, educational institutions see whether you satisfy requirements for admission to their education and training programmes. They may require you to obtain a vocational education and training qualification for adults in a given field in order to obtain a federally recognised qualification.

Depending on the type of education and training, different bodies in Switzerland will be responsible for certifying the level of education, training or competence associated with your qualification or recognising your qualification as equivalent to a specific Swiss qualification. Most of the websites indicated below provide information in German, French and Italian, and in some cases in English.

University qualifications

University qualifications fall under the authority of the Rectors' Conference of Swiss Higher Education Institutions: www.swissuniversities.ch.

It is up to individual institutions (i.e. cantonal universities, Federal Institutes of Technology and universities of teacher education) to decide whether admission may be granted to holders of a foreign upper-secondary level certificate or diploma.

Upper-secondary level vocational qualifications, tertiary-level professional qualifications, tertiary-level UAS qualifications and other qualifications

The Swiss system of vocational and professional education and training (VPET system) falls under the authority of the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI): www.sbf.admin.ch > education > recognition of foreign qualifications. The VPET system is comprised of two sectors: the vocational education and training (VET) sector at upper-secondary level; and the professional education sector, at tertiary level. Sectors in which VPET programmes are typically offered include the following: social care; industry; crafts; trade; commerce; hotels, restaurants and catering; housekeeping. SERI is also responsible for determining whether foreign certificates and diplomas can be recognised as equivalent to those issued by a Swiss university of applied sciences (UAS). UAS programmes typically cover: engineering and information technology; architecture, construction and planning; chemistry and life sciences; agriculture and forestry; economics and services; design; social work; music, theatre and arts; and applied linguistics. SERI also maintains a list of institutions responsible for the recognition of qualifications in specific professions.

Criteria for the recognition of foreign certificates and diplomas:

- The duration of education and training outside Switzerland (including compulsory education) must be the same as for equivalent education and training in Switzerland.
- In addition to theory, your training needs to have included practical experience.
- At the end of your training, you need to have taken a final examination recognised at national level.
- There has to be a clearly recognisable equivalent to your training in Switzerland, and it must relate to an occupation or profession that falls within the scope of the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETA, SR 412.10).
- You must be able to demonstrate that you have a specific level of mastery of a national language of Switzerland (CEFR: level B2 to C2).

EU/EFTA

Switzerland and the EU/EFTA mutually recognise their qualifications for state-regulated occupations and professions. SERI can provide information concerning the recognition procedure and contact points responsible for recognition.

Regulated occupations and professions

Various occupations and professions are regulated in Switzerland, which means that you need to obtain official recognition of your foreign certificates or diplomas in order to work in this capacity. This is the case for a number of professions in health care, education, social work and law (e.g. building contractors, geomatic engineers, lawyers, social workers, teachers, speech therapists, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, pharmacists, etc.)

Contacts:

Health care

Non-university professions (e.g. nurses, physiotherapists, nutritionists): Swiss Red Cross www.redcross.ch

University medical professions (e.g. doctors, dentists, veterinarians, pharmacists): Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) www.bag.admin.ch

Psychologists: Psychology Professions Commission psyko@bag.admin.ch

Osteopaths: Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Public Health www.gdk-cds.ch.

Education: Teachers, special needs educators, speech therapists, psychomotor therapists: Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) www.edk.ch.

Teachers and trainers in vocational education and training (VET): cantonal VET offices www.sbbk.ch

Law: Cantonal courts. The website www.swissuniversities.ch has a list of contacts for those wishing to work within the justice system.

Engineering: Architecture and civil engineering professions may or may not be regulated, depending on the canton. More details can be found on the website www.swissuniversities.ch.

Geomatic engineers must be inscribed in the official register. Information can be found at www.cadastre.ch

Business: Gastronomy: cantonal employment office in the canton where the hotel, restaurant or catering business is to be located: www.ch.ch

Auditing: Federal Audit Oversight Authority (FAOA) www.rab-asr.ch

Social work : State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI): www.sbf.admin.ch

Self-employment: Cantonal employment office www.ch.ch