

# Switzerland

## Demographics for Switzerland

Population:	7,489,370 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$251.9 billion
Currency (inc code):	Swiss Franc (CHF)
Language(s):	German (official), French (official), Italian (official), Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, Portuguese, Spanish, English
Internet country code:	.ch

## Primary and secondary education

Primary school is typically attended for six to seven years, starting usually at the age of six. Earlier kindergarten education is not mandatory but broadly available. From the third year on, an introduction in one foreign language is compulsory, mainly covering the national languages (German, French or Italian). However, some regions ("cantons") recently started to introduce English as a possible choice. After the sixth grade a very selective entry exam must be passed in order to progress to grammar schools, which in turn allow access to university. In some regions only 10 percent of a cohort is permitted to enroll for the six-year grammar school program. For those unsuccessful in the first place, there is usually a second entry examination after two more years of studies that then allows registering for a four-year program. As a third opportunity it is also possible to obtain a professional high-school certificate as a parallel education in addition to an apprenticeship. This then opens the way to polytechnics but not to

universities. On average the high-school leaving certificate ("Matura") is achieved by less than 20 percent of an age cohort.

Most schools are publicly run. The few private schools are mostly boarding schools for international students, including well-known places like the Lyceum Alpinum Zuoz or the Institut Le Rosey.

### **Higher education**

Countrywide there are 12 public universities that offer education at undergraduate as well as graduate and doctoral level. Three universities are specialized, the federal institutes of technology (ETH) in Zurich and Lausanne and the University of St Gallen (HSG) with studies in business, economics, law and social sciences. All other universities offer a full range of disciplines. Furthermore there exist six public polytechnics or so called "Fachhochschulen" with a less academic-driven and more practice-oriented focus. There are also 11 private schools in the higher education system.

The Swiss university system is in the middle of the "Bologna" transition towards Bachelor's and Master's education with mainly three-year Bachelor's and two-year Master's programs. While some universities have already implemented and started the new system, it will be established countrywide by 2006. The previous "Lizenziat" degree is mostly seen as an equivalent to a Master's.

The admission to higher education is legally determined. A Swiss high school leaving certificate must allow entry to any university in any subject of the student's choice. The only exception is medicine, where universities are allowed to require a specialized admission test. For foreign students there are different admission requirements and selection processes varying between the universities.

The Swiss University Conference (CUS) is the joint organization of the cantons and the Confederation for university politics. It has established the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Body (OAQ) as a central accreditation board to assure minimal standards in all institutions.

### **Business and management education**

In business and management studies, Bachelor's and Master's education is currently offered at almost all universities with a three-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) or of Science (BSc) and a one-and-a-half- to two-year Master of Arts (MA) or of Science (MSc) program. Executive education includes Master's of advanced studies including the MBA and EMBA. These programs are either offered as stand-alones or in co-operation with other business schools. The postgraduate Doctorate is currently a largely non-structured research-driven program. It is very highly respected in the business community, in a manner comparable to Doctorates from Germany and Austria as well as to some extent from the USA. Many top executives therefore hold Doctoral degrees. Today

some universities begin to introduce PhD programs in an effort to establish a more structured course of studies.

According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office 14,000 students were enrolled in the broader field of business and economic studies in 2004. Amongst these 30 percent were women and 28 percent were foreigners. A total of 41 percent of business and economics students participated in Bachelor's programs, 46 percent in Master's programs or in the classical *lizenziat* diploma and 13 percent in Doctoral or postgraduate studies. The number of entry-level undergraduate students declined over the last three years from nearly 3,000 (2002) to 2,590 (2003) and to only 2,184 (2004). A major reason for the currently shrinking market in Switzerland is the decreasing number of pupils leaving high-school.

Business departments are usually part of larger universities which are state-run and either under regional or federal control. All of them are, therefore, public and non-religious institutions. Also the schools' funding is mainly public. Tuition is legally restricted to a small contribution of approximately one thousand euros per year. However, as especially ambitious and innovative institutions can only grow with the help of private money, independent schools such as the IMD and also the Executive School of the University of St Gallen rely on private funds such as tuition, consulting and sponsorship.

Permanent faculty within universities mostly consists of tenured professors who have usually earned a "habilitation" – a requirement combining a sort of second PhD with tenureship. Practitioners are commonly invited into individual classes as lecturers or guest speakers. Young faculty members work as assistants or independently. This system is very much comparable to others in the German-speaking area.

In Switzerland there are 15 universities and universities of applied science offering undergraduate business degree programs, and nine universities offering business Master's as well as Doctoral programs.

### **Important issues**

One of the major issues that universities in Switzerland are currently facing is the "Bologna" transition process to the Bachelor's and Master's system. Only very few business schools, for example the University of St Gallen, have yet realized the intended understanding of the BA degree, offering a wide variety of study opportunities on the basis of a broad curriculum. Many others continue with a rather narrow educational focus on one major topic.

As in many other European countries an increasing number of MBA and EMBA programs are being offered by universities of applied science and private institutions. As the European business community is not yet very familiar with this kind of education, human resources executives should carefully evaluate the origins of MBA and EMBA diplomas.

Other important issues in business education are the attention given to, and the relevance of, research; the shift from national to international executive education; and the potential of private funds to subsidize further academic development in state-owned universities.

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