



# AUSTRIA

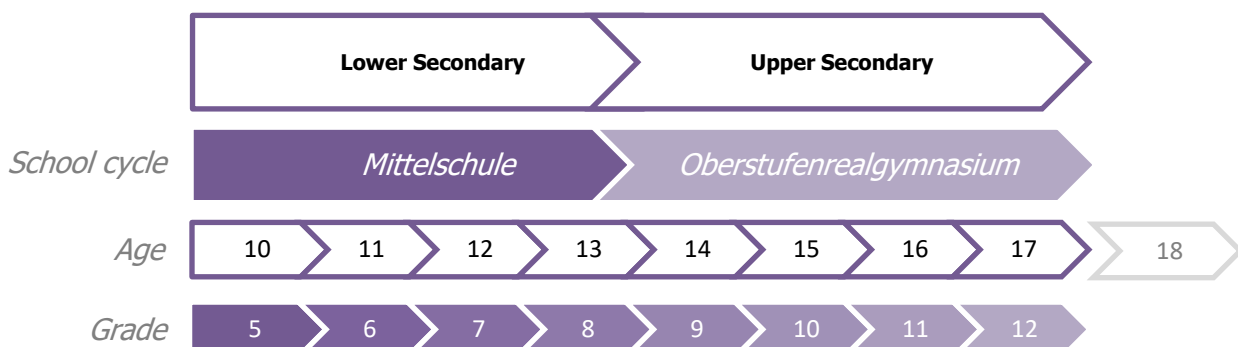
## INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

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The information below gives an overview of procedures<sup>1</sup> for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

### GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



<sup>1</sup> Based on data gathered in February 2021.

Upper secondary school is a four-year cycle, and only the first year is compulsory, until 15 years of age. General upper is offered both by the Oberstufenrealgymnasium, and by the Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule which comprises both lower and upper secondary school.

## Graduation and Certification

The end-of-school examination, which consists of three parts, provides a school leaving certificate, (Matura) and consists of three parts:

- 1) An academic paper whose topic is chosen in grade 11 and needs to be approved by the Ministry of Education. Pupils can choose any topic and a teacher for supervision and support. The paper has to be submitted by December in grade 12 and presented publicly before the written exams;
- 2) Written exams in 3 to 4 subjects. The compulsory exams are on Maths, German and a foreign language, and are defined at central level. A fourth subject can be chosen from the other main subjects, it is designed by the teacher and approved by the Ministry of Education.
- 3) Oral exams in 3 to 4 subjects: These can be chosen freely by the pupil subject to certain conditions (number of weekly hours taught, compulsory or optional subject, etc.). If pupils choose to take only 3 written exams, then they need to take 4 oral exams.

The school leaving exam provides entry to higher education. A university entrance exam is only required for certain faculties.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu)

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM AUSTRIA

### Age and grade

Austrian pupils may spend a school year, one semester or three months abroad between 15 and 18 years of age<sup>2</sup>. Typically, pupils go abroad for a full school year during 10th or 11th grades (third or second last year). Pupils do not usually go abroad during the 12th grade because final exams begin in April.

It is increasingly popular for pupils to go abroad in the second semester of 11th grade. However, going abroad during 11th grade might be challenging for some pupils, as during this period they are required to choose a topic for the academic paper to present by the end of the first semester of 12th grade as part of their final exam.

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<sup>2</sup> Eurydice, National Education systems, Austria, Mobility in Early Childhood and school education, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-early-childhood-and-school-education-1\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-early-childhood-and-school-education-1_en)

## Registration in the sending school

Before departure, you and your parents must discuss the options for enrolling in an exchange programme with your teachers. You remain enrolled in your sending school and have the right to return at any time.

## Funding for the sending school

The school receives funding for the number of pupils declared before the start of the school year.

## RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either up to 5 months, or between 5 months and a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than 5 months and finishing after the end of the school year in Austria.

The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

*Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>3</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than 5 months. For periods between 5 months and a full school year the procedure described below applies, on the top of a possible learning agreement.*

### Periods of between 2 and less than 5 months

For periods abroad shorter than 5 months, recognition procedures vary across schools. You may be required to take additional exams after returning to your sending school. In the case of periods abroad lasting between 4 months and a half and less than 5 months, and ending after the end of the school year in Austria, there is no standard practice in terms of recognition procedure. However, as these periods are a 'summer semester abroad' and follow the length of the school year in the host country, they could be considered as periods of 5 months.

### Periods of between 5 months and a full school year

According to the 1996 Austrian Law on Education, attending a foreign school for a period of between 5 and 12 months corresponds to successful school attendance in Austria.

Hence if you go on a long-term mobility, and to be reintegrated into your class, you must provide confirmation of attendance upon return, but do not need to provide a transcript of marks.

If you go abroad between September and February, you will need to pass only the first exams of the second semester upon return. If you leave for the summer semester, you officially end the school year successfully while abroad, and are admitted to the new school year with your peers.

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<sup>3</sup> within a school-to-school partnerships, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned

Validation of the year abroad means that in the final school report the school year will result as 'passed' without any marks noted.

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN AUSTRIA

### Registration in the host school

As a hosted pupil, you are enrolled as 'extra' pupil (*außerordentlicher Schüler*), which means that your learning will be assessed differently compared to the regular pupils. You are usually placed in classes based on both your age and marks in your sending school. Should you request to be placed in a different grade, you will have to provide sufficient reasons.

You cannot be placed in the last year of upper secondary school, i.e. 12th grade, as lessons finish in March in preparation for exams between April and June.

### Funding for the host school

Schools do not receive any additional funding for hosted pupils.

### Certification for hosted pupils

Your host school in Austria will provide you with a certificate of attendance and all necessary documentation asked for by your sending school.

### Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

You cannot obtain the final secondary school diploma (*Matura*) as this is a centralised exam which takes place over two years and includes a paper for which the topic has to be chosen a year before the final examination and handed in at the end of the first trimester of the final year.

## TESTIMONIAL

### Lea from Austria: a full school year in France

*"I learnt a lot about myself and who I wanted to be."*

My mother already went on exchange and motivated me to do the same. I had the desire to travel, to make new experiences and to get to know a different culture.

At the beginning, I had to talk with hands and feet to communicate with the people. I sometimes felt a little lonely during my stay, but that pushed me harder to get more in contact with others. Through the stay abroad, I got to know myself better and discovered new things I was interested in.

*Easy recognition back to Austria, some difficulties to catch up*

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When I came back from France, I could enrol in my old school and continue studying with my classmates. I always thought that I would easily manage to keep up in my old class once I came back, but I did have some difficulties. I succeeded anyways, but I probably could have done better if I had learned the content of the subjects in the summer, after returning home.

If you want to do an exchange, then do it! But if you are not convinced that it is the right thing for you, and you just want to do it because it might look good on paper, I would not recommend it. For me, this experience is part of the person I am today, and being able to speak French is a great asset.

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