

Guidelines on Admission to Bachelor's Degree Programmes

These guidelines govern the responsibilities for reviewing the equivalency of foreign school-leaving certificates as part of the admission process for a Bachelor's degree programme at the ZHAW.

1. Principles and terms

These guidelines are based on Art. 25, Admission to universities of applied sciences, and on the transitional provisions of Art. 73 of the Federal Act on Funding and Coordination of the Swiss Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Act, HEdA) as well as on the subordinate legislation.

School-leaving certificates are pre-tertiary educational qualifications. Recognised university entrance qualifications are school-leaving certificates that allow the holder to be admitted directly or after an admission process to a Bachelor's degree programme at a university in Switzerland and/or abroad. Upper secondary school-leaving certificates (e.g. high school diplomas and A-levels) are considered university entrance qualifications.

2. Best practices

Except as otherwise specified internally by the ZHAW, the recognition of equivalency for admission is in line with the best practices defined by the chamber of universities of applied sciences and arts ([Zulassung zum Bachelorstudium an Fachhochschulen](#), available in German).

3. Purpose

These guidelines ensure a uniform recognition practice that treats applicants equally unless explicitly excepted by the governing legislation.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Admission process by the Schools

4.1.1 Admission to degree programmes

Admission to the ZHAW is linked to a specific degree programme. The admission process is organised by the academic offices responsible in the respective Schools on the basis of the Higher Education Act (HEdA) and the academic regulations as well as the [ZHAW's own regulations](#). The Schools are responsible for specifying the details of the process.

The academic offices ensure that the submitted documents are evaluated and that the results of the evaluation process are conveyed and entered into the administration software foreseen for this purpose.

4.1.2 Foreign university entrance qualifications: evaluation of equivalency

Foreign school-leaving certificates and university entrance qualifications are reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. The ZHAW reviews all university entrance qualifications that allow the holder access to a Bachelor's degree programme at a university or university of applied sciences in the country in which they were issued. In addition, the ZHAW reviews the European Baccalaureate and the International Baccalaureate upper secondary school-leaving

certificates. An overview of all the documents to be submitted can be found on the website [Important information](#).

2. The ZHAW requires that at minimum the following subjects must have been studied during the last three years before obtaining the upper secondary school-leaving certificate or be listed as final-year subjects in the university entrance qualification.

1. First language (native language)

2. Second or foreign language*

3. Mathematics

4. Another subject from at least one of the following areas: natural sciences (biology, chemistry or physics), technology (computer science or engineering) or humanities and social sciences (geography, history or economics/law).

* Since 2023, the foreign or second language can also be demonstrated by presenting a language certificate for at least the B2 level obtained after the upper secondary school-leaving certificate.

Evidence of German language competence at the C1 level must also be provided upon applying to the study programme. For English-language degree programmes, all applicants must have sufficient knowledge of English instead of German (see [Important information](#)). The requirement specified in Art. 11 of the [Regulations on Admission, Matriculation and Ex-matriculation at the ZHAW](#) applies.

3. If these criteria are met, then:

- the equivalency of the qualification is recognised (as long as the subject requirement is met).

This holds for university entrance qualifications according to the national law of the countries involved in one of the agreements below:

- Signatories to the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities No. 015/1953
- Signatories to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region No. 165/1997 (Lisbon Recognition Convention)
- Germany, Austria, France and Italy, which have bilateral agreements with Switzerland on equivalency for access to university education.

These countries are indicated with E, L and B, respectively, in the [swissuniversities list of countries](#).

In addition, the following international diplomas are recognised

- European Baccalaureate (unconditionally)
- International Baccalaureate (minimum of 32 out of 45 points).

- Proof of the ability to study can be determined through an *entrance examination to establish the equivalency of the school-leaving certificate* (as long as the subject requirement is met, see section 4.1.3). This holds for university entrance qualifications according to the national law of those countries for which no agreement exists as per the list above.

Potential students with university entrance qualifications from the countries E, L or B or with a European Baccalaureate who do not meet the subject requirements or who have an International Baccalaureate with fewer than 32 points, can be admitted if they pass the *entrance examination to establish the equivalency of the school-leaving certificate*.



4.1.3 Entrance examination

The provisions stated in the annex to the academic regulations of the selected degree programme apply to the *entrance examination to establish the equivalency of the school-leaving certificate*.

4.2 Evaluation of equivalency by the Academic Affairs Unit

The Academic Affairs Unit is responsible for evaluating the equivalency of foreign school-leaving certificates and university entrance qualifications. This ensures uniform practice. The decision is finalised without a signature.

The Academic Affairs Unit can delegate the evaluation of frequently submitted and easily verified foreign university entrance qualifications to the Schools concerned. These exceptions are listed in the instructions for admission to a Bachelor's programme ([Arbeitsanweisung zur Zulassungsprüfung zum Bachelorstudium](#), in German).

5. Validity

These regulations take effect upon the President's decision of 01/02/2023 for admissions as of Autumn Semester 2022. Previously confirmed admissions remain valid.

6. Issued by

Disclaimer

This is a non-binding, unofficial translation of the original German version, "[Richtlinie zur Zulassungsprüfung zum Bachelorstudium](#)". While it was prepared with all due care, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences takes no responsibility for any remaining omissions and/or errors. The legally binding document is the original German version, which shall prevail in any case of doubt or differences of interpretation. Please note that English is not an official language of the Swiss Confederation or the Canton of Zurich. This document is provided for information purposes only and has no legal force.

Original German version dated 01/02/2023.

6.1 Metadata

Subject*	Content
Issued by	Head of the Academic Affairs Unit
Decided by	President
Subject classification	1.04.01 Guiding documents
Publication type	Public

6.2 Issued by

Version	Decision	Decided by	Validity	Description of change
1.0.0	16 August 2011	President	HS2012	Original version
1.1.0	13 December 2012	President	16 September 2013	Revised
1.2.1	-	-	-	Layout adapted for BPM, 09/09/2013
1.3.0	28 February 2014	President	28 February 2014	Revised



Version	Decision	Decided by	Validity	Description of change
1.3.1	-	-	-	Editorial changes, 02/02/2016
2.0.0	14 August 2017	President	14 August 2017	Revisions due to changes in admission practices
2.0.1	-	-	-	Editorial changes, 18/09/2018
2.0.2	-	-	-	Editorial changes, 21/11/2019
3.0.0	23 September 2020	President	23 September 2020	Revisions due to changes in admission practices
3.0.1	-	-	-	Clarification of entrance examination, 24/09/2020
3.0.2	-	-	-	Editorial changes, 08/04/2021
4.0.0	1 February 2023	President	1 February 2023	Revision due to the incorporation of the Continuing Education Unit into the Academic Affairs Unit and a change in admission practices (section 4.1.2)
4.0.1	-	-	-	Editorial changes, 10/03/2023
4.0.2	-	-	-	Editorial changes, 16.01.2024
4.0.3	-	-	-	Editorial changes, 27.03.2025