

# THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN SWITZERLAND

One of the specialties of the Swiss education system is its dual education. The primary and lower secondary levels are compulsory, and together usually take nine years. After this period, young people have a choice between a general academic path preparing students for the Matura (Swiss Baccalaureate) and an apprenticeship together with vocational school. More than 50% of young people choose to learn one of 300 professions. After or during their apprenticeship, students can attend a school to get a Professional Maturity Certificate. With this certificate they are allowed to study at one of the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). Together with the traditional universities (ten cantonal and two national), the UAS build the tertiary level of education. Both paths lead to bachelor's and master's degrees.

The UAS have four missions by law: First of all, they have to offer bachelor's and master's degrees. In general, a school provides a wide range of different studies. For instance, a student of the School of Management and Law (Member of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences) can choose between Business Administration, International Management, Business Information Technology and Business Law. Secondly and thirdly, the UAS engage in the area of applied research & development and in consulting services. The last part of the mission, continuing education, considers the need for lifelong learning. In this area, the

UAS offer a broad range of courses, seminars, and degree programs such as the Master's of Advanced Studies.

The main differences between the traditional universities and the UAS are the following: The degree programs of the UAS enhance practically-oriented education. The students are ideally prepared for immediate entry into the professional job market. Most of the students have no problems finding adequate jobs after their studies; unemployed status is practically unknown. In the areas of R&D and consulting services, the UAS involve the economy in a very strong way. Most projects are based on collaboration between the faculty, the students and company representatives. Due to a good split of tasks, the results of the projects are immediately ready for realization in practice. Most of the companies consider this way of collaboration as a model for success. From a Swiss perspective, it is worth it for each economy to install a system of UAS in an overall system of dual education.

## Author

**Lic. Oec. HSG Stephan Loretan**

Head of the Institute for General Management  
School of Management and Law at Zurich University of  
Applied Sciences  
Stadthausstrasse 14, CH-8401 Winterthur  
stephan.loretan@zhaw.ch