Tailoring apprenticeship Switzerland

Do you want to become a tailor and wonder whether an apprenticeship is the only way to get there in Switzerland? There are two routes: the three-year vocational apprenticeship leading to a federal qualification, and hands-on training for adults at a private school. Here you will find out how both work, what they require and how they can be combined.

What is the tailoring apprenticeship called in Switzerland?

The tailoring apprenticeship is officially called Bekleidungsgestalterin EFZ or Bekleidungsgestalter EFZ (clothing designer with Federal VET Diploma). It takes three years and leads to the Federal VET Diploma (EFZ). There is no two-year version with a Federal VET Certificate (EBA) for this occupation.

The former occupations of dressmaker and men’s tailor live on in the specialisations of the apprenticeship: women’s clothing, men’s clothing, fur clothing, headwear, and work and protective clothing.

How does the apprenticeship work?

As a rule, you work four days a week at a company in the fashion and textile industry and spend one day a week at a vocational school. Inter-company courses are added on top. Some training workshops also offer the apprenticeship full-time, with company and school under one roof.

To be admitted, you need to have completed compulsory schooling. Before applying, it is worth doing a taster placement, where you spend a few days working in a studio. You can find open apprenticeship positions and taster placements on berufsberatung.ch.

How much do apprentices earn?

Apprentice pay is modest. According to the pay recommendations on berufsberatung.ch, it is CHF 350 to 450 a month in the first year, CHF 400 to 600 in the second and CHF 650 to 800 in the third. These are guideline figures and vary by region and company.

For adults with ongoing living costs, this is often the point at which an apprenticeship is no longer an option.

What does a tailor do?

A tailor makes garments, either as one-off pieces made to measure or for a collection. She or he advises the customer, sketches the design, takes measurements, drafts the pattern and cuts the fabric. The individual parts are then sewn, reinforced and pressed until the garment is finished.

Tailors work in studios, fashion houses, alteration shops and in production. Many textile companies are based in eastern Switzerland and Ticino. Some later set up their own studio.

What skills should you bring?

For both routes, the most important thing is enjoying the craft. Manual dexterity, spatial awareness and a sense of aesthetics matter. Since you take measurements and calculate fabric quantities, a feel for numbers helps.

A careful, precise way of working counts just as much: one centimetre too much when cutting shows on the finished garment. And if you later advise customers, you need to enjoy dealing with people.

Is an apprenticeship right for adults?

For many adults, a three-year apprenticeship is not a realistic option. They already have a job, a family or depend on a full income. For them, there is hands-on training at private schools that is shorter and designed for adults.

Good to know: this kind of training does not replace an apprenticeship and does not lead to the EFZ. What it does give you is the craft you need to work as a tailor.

What do you learn at the Swiss Fashion Academy?

The Swiss Fashion Academy is an eduQua-certified private school for adult education in Zurich. In the Cutting, Sewing and Tailoring course, you learn in six months how to make garments, from the pattern to the finished piece. The course ends with a certificate from the Swiss Fashion Academy.

You work with domestic, industrial and overlock sewing machines, learn to identify and handle fabrics and draft your own patterns. You sew in zips and buttonholes, construct

sleeves and collars and make skirts, blouses, trousers and dresses. Classes are held in small groups. You can find all details on content, dates and prices on the Cutting, Sewing and Tailoring course page.

Training as a tailor in Switzerland: apprenticeship or course?

The apprenticeship takes three years, requires an apprenticeship contract with a company and ends with the EFZ. It is the right route if you are at the start of your working life and want a federal qualification.

The course at the Swiss Fashion Academy takes six months, does not require an apprenticeship position and ends with a certificate. It suits you if, as an adult, you want to get into the craft quickly and in a practical way. If you want to learn alongside your job, read our guide Tailor training part-time.

Can I still obtain the EFZ later?

Yes, via a separate route. After your certificate and a few years of professional experience, the second-chance route under Art. 32 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Ordinance (VPETO) is open to you. It allows you to register for the EFZ qualification procedure without an apprenticeship. Preparation courses are offered by the industry associations; your cantonal careers advice service can tell you more.

What comes after the EFZ?

With the EFZ, the further education options of the Swiss professional education system are open to you. The federal professional examination leads to the Federal Diploma of Higher Education, and the advanced federal professional examination to the Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education, for example as a clothing designer or fashion designer. There are also programmes at colleges of higher education and degree courses at universities of applied sciences in related fields.

How can you find out whether the job suits you?

The easiest way is a free trial lesson. You see how classes work, sit at the sewing machine yourself and can ask your questions directly. Book a free trial lesson

Prefer to talk in person? Call us on 044 340 10 70, write to us via the contact form or on

WhatsApp.

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