

From Transcripts to Diplomas: The Academic Documents AELO Swiss Academy Requires

Every admissions cycle follows a familiar pattern. Families spend weeks polishing the motivation letter, choosing the right photographs, rehearsing for the interview, and then lose far more time to paperwork: a transcript that arrives without its grading legend, a diploma missing a stamp, a translation the registrar cannot accept. Having guided applicants through Swiss academy admissions for a number of years, I have learned to treat the document file as a project in its own right, with its own calendar, its own risks, and its own standard of quality. AELO Swiss Academy is no exception. Its admissions team reviews academic documents with the same rigour Swiss institutions apply across the board, and for good reason.

This piece sets out the file you need to assemble, explains why each element matters, and flags the points where applications most often stall. The specifics below reflect established practice at Swiss private academies and the cycles I have worked on; the admissions office confirms the current list for each intake, so treat it as your final checkpoint before submission.

Why Swiss academies inspect paper so closely

Switzerland's education sector trades on trust. A school that accepts an international cohort carries the obligation to show, to parents and to the authorities, that every student was placed in the right programme on the basis of verified evidence. That obligation is not decorative. Under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which Switzerland has ratified, credentials from one country should be assessed fairly against those of another, but fairness requires the assessing institution to see the original record, understand the grading system behind it, and confirm that the document is authentic.

There is a second, practical layer. For students who need a Swiss residence permit, the academic file feeds directly into the cantonal application. An inconsistency that survives the admissions review will surface again at the migration stage, where it costs far more time. A surname spelled one way on the passport and another on the diploma, for instance, is a minor irritation in the admissions folder and a genuine problem in a permit file. Careful document work at the start therefore protects the whole journey, not merely the offer letter.

The core file

The academic heart of an application to AELO Swiss Academy consists of a small number of documents, each with a specific job. Transcripts demonstrate what a student has studied and how they have performed over time. The diploma or leaving certificate demonstrates that a programme was actually completed. Language certificates demonstrate that the student can follow instruction in the language of the programme. Around these sit supporting items: proof of identity, school reports where the transcript alone is thin, and, for some programmes, portfolios or entrance assessment results.

In practice, the academic file looks like this:

- Official transcripts covering the last two to three academic years, or the whole secondary phase where requested
- The diploma or leaving certificate, or a provisional certificate where final results are still pending
- The grading scale legend or an official explanation of the marking system

- Evidence of language proficiency at the level the programme requires
- Certified translations of any document not issued in the language of instruction

Each of these carries a trap for the unwary, and the sections below take them in turn.

Transcripts in detail: years, scales, and the legend problem

A usable transcript is not a report card. It is an official record issued by the school, on letterhead, signed and stamped, listing the subjects studied, the period of attendance, the marks or grades awarded, and the promotion decisions for each year. The usual window is the last two to three academic years, though some programmes ask for the complete secondary record, particularly when the applicant is transferring mid-phase.

The single most common defect I encounter is the missing grading legend. A Swiss admissions officer cannot interpret a Brazilian "MB", a Turkish "5", or an Indian percentage band without knowing where those values sit on the local scale. Schools therefore want the legend issued by the school itself, or an official explanation from the examining body, attached to the transcript. Self-converted grades, where a family has helpfully recalculated everything into a Swiss or American scale, carry no weight and occasionally do harm, because they invite questions about the conversion method. Submit the raw record with its legend and let the academy do the interpreting.

Two further points deserve attention. First, screenshots from parent portals are not transcripts. Registrars issue official documents on request, and the request can take one to three weeks, longer around end-of-term periods when every family is asking for the same thing. Second, repeated years and unusual subject patterns should be visible, not hidden. An evaluator who finds a repeated year that the file quietly omits will question everything else in the folder; one who sees it explained plainly will rarely raise it again.

Diplomas, leaving certificates, and proof of completion

The diploma answers a different question from the transcript. Where the transcript shows performance, the diploma shows completion: that the student finished a recognised programme and is entitled to the qualification. For applicants who have already graduated, this means the final certificate, ideally accompanied by any official supplement that lists the subjects and results in detail, as the European Baccalaureate and Swiss Maturité supplements do.

For applicants still in their final year, the standard mechanism across the sector is the conditional offer. The application proceeds on the strength of interim evidence, provisional certificates, predicted grades for IB candidates, statements of entry for A-level candidates, and the final diploma is owed before enrolment. This is normal and well understood, but it must be handled cleanly. The provisional document should come from the school or examining body, state clearly that final results are pending, and be replaced promptly once the final certificate exists. A family that arrives in September still holding only a provisional certificate creates an administrative problem for itself, and occasionally for the permit application as well.

Apostilles and legalisation: making foreign documents readable in Switzerland

Authenticity is where many files stumble, because the answer depends on where the document was issued. Switzerland is party to the 1961 Hague Apostille Convention. For documents from member countries, an apostille, a single certificate attached by a designated authority, confirms the signature and seal on the underlying document. In the United States that authority is usually the Secretary of State of the issuing state; in

Germany it is frequently the regional court or prefecture; in Switzerland itself, the cantonal chancelleries. For documents from countries outside the Convention, full chain legalisation applies: a notary first, then the national foreign ministry, then the Swiss embassy or consulate.

| Situation | What the document needs | Typical time frame |

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| Issued in a Hague Convention country | Apostille from the designated authority | A few days to three weeks |



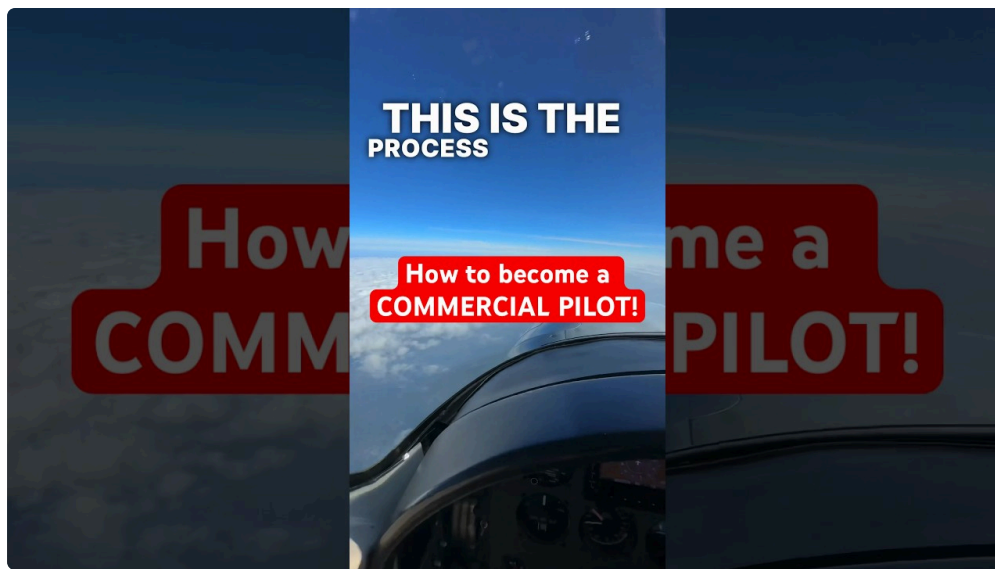
| Issued outside the Convention | Notary, foreign ministry, then Swiss consulate | Two to six weeks |

| Issued in Switzerland | Usually accepted as issued; certified copies where requested | Days |

Not every document in the file will need this treatment. Diplomas almost always do in the cycles I have handled; transcripts sometimes, depending on the issuing country and the programme; language certificates issued directly by the examining body rarely, because the academy can verify those against the issuer's records. Confirm which documents require an apostille before you queue at any government office, and confirm it in writing. The time ranges in the table are typical rather than guaranteed, and processing queues in June and July can stretch every estimate.

Certified translations: language, layout, and the translator's statement

Documents issued in a language other than the language of instruction need a certified translation, and the word certified does the heavy lifting. A translation prepared by a relative, however fluent, carries no standing. The academy expects a translation by a sworn or certified translator, accompanied where applicable by the translator's declaration that the rendering is complete and accurate.



Quality here has two dimensions. The first is completeness: every mark, stamp, signature block, and footnote should be translated or annotated, because evaluators read the whole page, not just the grades. The second is fidelity of layout: a translation that mirrors the structure of the original, table for table, is far easier to check against the source than one that reorganises the content. Translators experienced with academic documents do this as a matter of course, which is one reason to choose a specialist over a generalist, even at a modest price premium.

The target language should match the language of instruction of the programme, or English where the academy's admissions process operates bilingually. Keep the original and the translation together in the file, one behind the other, so the reader can move between them without effort.

Language proficiency evidence

For English-track programmes, IELTS and Cambridge examinations are the usual currency, with TOEFL appearing more often for older applicants; upper-secondary programmes commonly look for a B2 range, roughly an IELTS 5.5 to 6.5 band depending on the programme's demands. German-track programmes typically ask for Goethe-Institut or telc certificates at B1 or B2, and French-track programmes for DELF or DALF at the corresponding level. Test results generally carry a validity period, two years for IELTS being the best-known example, so an old certificate may need to be refreshed even if the level has not slipped.

A letter from the current school confirming that instruction was delivered in the relevant language is sometimes accepted as supporting evidence, but it is weaker than an independent certificate and should be treated as a complement, not a substitute. Where a student's school language and the target programme language differ, book the test early and allow one resit window in the calendar; it is the one element of the file the applicant can still change at short notice.

Names, gaps, and other edge cases

Three situations account for most of the difficult files I have seen.

The first is the name mismatch. Transliteration differences, a passport reading "Yury" where the diploma reads "Iurii", or a surname changed by marriage after the diploma was issued, are simple to resolve but only with evidence: the legal name-change document or marriage certificate, itself translated and, where needed, apostilled. Provide it proactively. An evaluator who has to ask will have already spent a week wondering.

The second is the gap year. A twelve-month absence from formal education is unremarkable in itself, and a short letter explaining the period, supported by evidence of employment, language study, or volunteering, resolves it in minutes. What causes friction is silence.

The third is the lost or non-standard record. Where originals have been lost, the issuing school or the national archives can usually reissue; a notarised copy is the fallback where reissue is genuinely impossible, and it should come with a brief explanation. Homeschooled applicants and those from systems built around national examinations, where a single exam result such as Brazil's ENEM or China's Gaokao dominates the record, should supply the full school transcript alongside the national result, since the academy needs the longitudinal picture the exam alone cannot give. Digitally issued documents with verification links or QR codes are increasingly accepted and are best submitted with the verification instructions included.

Sequencing the work: a realistic calendar

The documents have dependencies, and the order of operations matters more than the total effort. The sequence that has served my clients well runs as follows:

1. Request official transcripts and the grading legend from the current and previous schools, in writing, at least eight weeks before the application deadline.
2. Book the language test immediately, choosing a date that leaves room for one resit.
3. Send the diploma, as soon as results are final, for apostille or consular legalisation.
4. Commission certified translations once the apostilled or legalised copies exist, so the translator works from the final version.
5. Assemble the complete file, submit the scans, and keep the originals ready for verification at enrolment.

Twelve weeks is a comfortable runway for this sequence; eight is workable; six is where the risk of a missed deadline becomes real, particularly if a consulate is involved. Summer holidays slow every registrar and chancellery in Europe simultaneously, and the applicant who starts in August competes with every other applicant who did the same.

Submission format, originals, and what happens after

Most Swiss academies, AELO Swiss Academy included, begin with digital copies: colour scans, every page, legible stamps, sensible file names, one PDF per document rather than one enormous file containing everything. Scans of around 300 dpi are the practical standard, clear enough for verification without producing unmanageable file sizes. Submit only what has been asked for. A file padded with unrelated certificates slows the review and suggests the applicant has not read the instructions.

Originals come into play later. Verification at enrolment is standard practice, and some programmes ask for original documents by post before the student arrives. Families should therefore keep the originals intact, in one place, and travel with them rather than packing them into checked luggage. The offer letter will specify what must be presented and when; read that letter as carefully as the curriculum brochure.

The habit that prevents most problems

If there is one discipline that separates smooth applications from painful ones, it is this: obtain the current **bachelor of aviation** document list from the admissions office in writing, ask explicitly which documents require an apostille and which require translation, and then start with the slowest item in the file. The family from São

Paulo I mentioned at the outset lost five weeks waiting for an apostille they could have requested in April; once it arrived, everything else in their file fell into place within a fortnight. A file that reads cleanly, transcript with its legend, diploma with its apostille, translations that mirror their originals, gets read carefully and decided quickly. Everything else being equal, and in Swiss admissions it usually is, that is the file that wins the place.