Geneva's schooling system

**Primary education**

- **Elementary cycle**
  - 4 to 8 years old
  - 4 years (1P, 2P, 3P, 4P)

- **Middle cycle**
  - 8 to 12 years old
  - 4 years (5P, 6P, 7P, 8P)

**Secondary education I**

- **Orientation cycle**
  - 12 to 15 years old
  - 3 years (9CO, 10CO, 11CO)

**Secondary education II**

- **College**
  - 15 to 19 years old
  - Upper-secondary level education
  - Professional training courses

**Maturité (equivalent to the Baccalaureate / A-levels UK / High-school diploma USA)**

**Higher Education (Tertiary)**

- **University**
- **Universities of Applied Sciences & Arts (HES)**
- **Higher Vocational Schools (EPS)**

Compulsory schooling **starts at 4 years old**, it is numbered from **1 to 11**:

- Elementary cycle : 1P – 2P – 3P – 4P
- Middle cycle : 5P – 6P – 7P – 8P
- Orientation cycle 9CO - 10CO - 11CO

As of 2013, English language will be introduced starting 7P (primary)

**Nota bene:** As of the start of the new school year 2014, children aged between 8 to 11 years old (middle school 5P to 8P) will also go to school on Wednesday morning.

**Public schooling in Geneva:**

The period of compulsory schooling lasts for eleven years and consists of primary school and secondary school I. Attendance is mandatory and free of charge for all children, including foreign nationals.
4-12 years old (Primary)

**Primary schooling** is organized in two cycles of four years each:

- Elementary cycle: 1P – 2P – 3P – 4P
- Middle cycle: 5P – 6P – 7P – 8P

The "GIAP" *(Groupement intercommunal pour l’animation parascolaire)* organises activities for students, outside of school hours (morning, lunch and evening).

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Note: **for non-French speaking students from 4 to 12 years old**, the "Bureau d'accueil de l'enseignement primaire" offers welcome classes and integration help. Free French lessons are also available for parents.

Website and PDF brochure (In French):

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12-15 years old (Secondary I)

**Middle school education**: the **cycle d'orientation** (CO) follows primary schooling. This is the last phase of compulsory schooling in Geneva. Middle school education provides a secondary level education and paves the way for the various post-compulsory training courses.

Note: for non-French speaking pupils (12 to 15 years old) the **classes d'accueil of the cycle d'orientation** (CO) offers full time welcome classes where French language as well as other subjects such as math, German or physical education are taught in small groups. After a few months (depending on the length of the refresher course), students are able to join French speaking classes: [http://www.ge.ch/cycle_orientation/classes_accueil.asp](http://www.ge.ch/cycle_orientation/classes_accueil.asp).
Once middle school is completed, students gain access to **upper secondary level education** *(l’enseignement secondaire postobligatoire)* which splits up into three main forms:

1. **The "Collège"** (near equivalent of High School) *("gymnasiale" education)*
2. **The "École de Culture Générale"** (general education)
3. **Apprenticeship / Business schools, Professional schools** (vocational / professional education)

**The "Collège"**: this 4 years classical study course prepares students for University.

- Diploma: Baccalaureate, providing access to University, or under certain conditions (professional training and / or entrance examination) to Universities of Teacher Education (HEP), Universities of Applied Sciences & Arts (HES) and *"Ecoles Supérieures"*.

**The "École de Culture Générale"**: offers general culture education plus specific lessons in professional / vocational fields such as health, communication and visual arts.

- Diploma: specialized Baccalaureate, giving access to Universities of Applied Sciences (HES) & Arts & Higher Vocational Schools (EPS)

**Apprenticeship / Business schools, Professional schools**: goes through vocational training that can be done either in school (full time system) or on the field (dual system).

- Diploma: Certificat Fédéral de Capacité (CFC), Professional Baccalaureate can also be obtained, with additional training

PDF guide in French about post-compulsory schooling options: *"Après la scolarité obligatoire 2011-2012"*:

List of post compulsory institutions: [http://www.ge.ch/po/etablissements/](http://www.ge.ch/po/etablissements/).
Note: for non-French speaking pupils (15 to 19 years old) the "service de l'accueil du postobligatoire (ACPO)" provides welcome classes focusing on learning French (as well as other subjects) and integrating the professional world. At some point, classes are separated between "classes d'insertion professionnelle (CIP)" (oriented towards vocational schools) and "classes d'insertion scolaire (CIS)" (oriented towards traditional schooling, focusing on French language): [http://www.ge.ch/po/eleves_allophones.asp](http://www.ge.ch/po/eleves_allophones.asp).

Higher Education (Tertiary)

Once upper secondary level education has been completed, students have the following options, depending on the diploma obtained:

- **Geneva University**: regroups 7 faculties and 2 institutes. It is the standard path to follow after obtaining a Baccalaureate:
  - [http://www.unige.ch](http://www.unige.ch)
  - [http://hei.unige.ch](http://hei.unige.ch)
  - [http://www.unige.ch/iued](http://www.unige.ch/iued)

- **Universities of Applied Sciences & Arts (HES)**: HES formations are based on practice and open mainly for holders of a professional Baccalaureate. Under certain conditions, HES can also be accessible to holders of a regular Baccalaureate (professional training and / or entrance examination). Those schools are part of the réseau intercantonal HES-SO.
  - [http://www.hesge.ch](http://www.hesge.ch)

- **Higher Vocational Schools (EPS)**: students formed directly on the filed (dual system) or through full time school obtain a **Certificat Fédéral de Capacité (CFC)**; allowing them to immediately integrate the professional world. Holders of a professional Baccalaureate can also integrate Universities of Applied Sciences & Arts (HES) to follow tertiary training.
  - [http://www.geneve.ch/ofpc](http://www.geneve.ch/ofpc)


Note: the Swiss higher education now follows the requirements of the Bologna process; **bachelor's** (three years), **master's** (1–2 years), Master of Advanced Studies (1–2 years), doctorate (3–5 years).
Specialized Education and children with special needs

- "L'enseignement spécialisé" (specialized education) provides support to students between 4 to 20 years old students who cannot benefit from the standard schooling system (physical, cognitive, mental, developmental disabilities): [http://www.ge.ch/omp/](http://www.ge.ch/omp/).

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Some links:

[http://www.geneve.ch/dip/](http://www.geneve.ch/dip/)  

Detailed charts:
• Public education in Geneva
• The Swiss education system