Diploma Programme: Entrance Examination

Candidates for admission to the Diploma Programme are required to pass the oral entrance examination at the *Diplomatische Akademie Wien* – Vienna School of International Studies or online via MS Teams. In some cases, candidates may be invited to take the entrance exam at an Austrian embassy or consulate general.

Candidates are admitted to the entrance examination provided they fulfil the following requirements:

- hold a first level degree of at least 180 ECTS credits (or equivalent) from an accredited institution of higher education (university, college)
- have a very good command of English; the level expected is B2–C1. In very exceptional circumstances, a candidate may be accepted with a minimum B1 level but is then required, as a condition of acceptance, to do intensive remedial English language courses to be completed by 1 September before the commencement of the academic year.

Basic knowledge of German (A1) and a command of French equivalent to a certified A2 level at the time of the entrance exam are recommended but not required. If available, French and German language skills will be an asset for the candidate's application record. If the admitted candidate could not prove French language skills on A2 level, then intensive remedial French language courses have to be completed before the beginning of the academic year.

Please find the following information on the next pages:

- Preparing for the Entrance Examination
- Recommended Literature
- Examples of Questions Set

1 Preparing for the Entrance Examination

The purpose of the entrance examination is to establish whether a candidate has the appropriate qualifications for the successful completion of the Diploma Programme. As the number of places at the DA is limited, candidates are admitted in the order of their ranking. The results of the entrance exams are only valid in the year in which they were held.

The entrance examination consists of an oral interview. The exam can be held at Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, online via MS Teams, or, in some cases, at Austrian embassies or consulates general.

The oral exam takes place before a commission, and it is held in English. Besides discussing their motivation and future plans with the commission, candidates are questioned on:

- current issues in international affairs
- general knowledge
- one of the following areas:
    a) international relations
    b) history in the 19th and 20th century
    c) economics and international economic relations
    d) international law and European law
    e) cultural studies

After the application deadline expires, candidates will be asked to notify the chosen discipline to the Registrar's office.

Additionally, and where applicable, language skills in French and German are tested in a separate short interview.

A reading list, together with suggested reading, is available to help you prepare for the entrance examination. Also, you are strongly advised to read on a regular basis relevant reports and analyses in newspapers and specialized magazines such as International Edition of the New York Times, The Financial Times, Le Monde, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, The Economist, Foreign Affairs etc.

2 Recommended Literature

Kindly note that these titles are suggestions, you can use any other comparable textbooks available to you.

International Relations

- Bjola, Corneliu, and Markus Kornprobst. (2025): *Understanding international diplomacy: Theory, practice and ethics*. (Routledge).
- Cini, M., & Borragán, N. P. S. (2019). *European union politics*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Keukeleire, Stephan, and Tom Delreux. *The foreign policy of the European Union*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.
- Sørensen, Georg, Jørgen Møller, and Robert H. Jackson. (2022): *Introduction to international relations: theories and approaches*. (Oxford University Press).

International Law

- Gleider Hernández, *International Law*, 3rd ed.
- Tanzi, *A Concise Introduction to International Law*, 3rd ed.

European Law

- Robert Schütze, *An Introduction to EU Law*, 4th ed.
- Thomas Jäger, *Einführung in das Europarecht,* 4. Aufl.

Economics

- Hazlitt, H. (1988): *Economics in One Lesson: The Shortest and Surest Way to Understand Basic Economics* (Crown)
- Cowen, T. and A. Tabarrok (2024): *Modern Principles of Economics*, 6th ed. (Macmillan Learning) – chapters on inflation, international trade and exchange rates. Free accompanying videos are available at mru.org.

History

- Mazower, M. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (Penguin, 2018).
- Westad, O.A. *The Cold War: A World History* (Penguin, 2018).
- Ghodsee, K. and M. Orenstein, *Taking Stock of Shock: Social Consequences of the 1989 Revolutions* (Oxford, 2021).
- Beller, S. *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge, 2007).

Cultural Studies

- Barker, Chris (2012): Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ang, I., Isar, Y. R., & Mar, P. (2015). Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest? *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, *21*(4), 365–381. https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1080/10286632.2015.1042474
- Couldry, Nick (2019): Media. Why it matters, Cambridge: Polity.

3 Examples of Questions for the Oral Exam

International Relations

- What are the main schools of thought in International Relations?
- What is power and the balance of power?
- Do we live in the age of global governance?
- Does globalization do away with the nation-state?
- What is diplomacy?
- What are the tasks diplomats perform?
- What is the role of religion in international politics?
- What important types of actors are there in world politics?
- What explains the origins of the European Union?

Contemporary History

- How, why, and when did the nation-state become the dominant mode of political organization? What were the alternatives, and were they viable?
- Who supported democracy in the 20th century, and why?
- To what extent/how does the Habsburg past continue to shape Central and Eastern Europe? The Nazi past? The Cold War?
- What role does historical memory play in international relations?
- How can histories of race, class, and/or gender inform the practice of diplomacy?
- How have ideas of Europe changed over the past century?
- What should a global approach to European history look like?

International Law and European Law

- What are the sources of international law?
- What do you understand by "subjects of international law"?
- Name the tasks of the Security Council of the United Nations.
- Name some of the recent judgements of the International Court of Justice and sketch out their most important points.
- Explain the concept of "extra-territoriality".
- What are the implications of the principle of "non-intervention"?
- What do you understand by the "right of self-determination of the peoples"?
- What are the tasks of a diplomatic officer?
- What do you understand by "diplomatic privilege"?
- What is the role of the European Parliament?
- What is a directive? What is a regulation?
- Describe NATO and briefly discuss its (future) role.

Economics and International Economic Relations

The questions are discussed in conversation. Candidates should be able to explain basic economic concepts in their own words and apply them to simple examples. No formulas or technical knowledge are required.

- What is inflation, and what does it mean for consumers and savers?
- What is an exchange rate? If the euro weakens against the US dollar, who in Austria gains and who loses?
- Who gains and who loses when a country imposes a tariff on imports?
- Does rebuilding after a war or a natural disaster boost the economy?
- What is opportunity cost? Give an example from everyday life.
- Why are diamonds expensive and water cheap? What do prices tell producers and consumers?
- Will automation and artificial intelligence destroy jobs in the long run?

Cultural Studies

- Why does media matters for culture and politics?
- How does globalization affect culture?
- Are culture and nature opposite ideas?
- What is the difference between national and nationalist cultures?
- What do you understand by modernity?
- What is meant by ‘celebrity culture’?
- How would you describe cultural identity?
- What is the difference between gender and sexual identity?
- Is cultural diversity a recent feature of societies?