

career planning tools and resources every aelo swiss academy student should use

Switzerland built its reputation on precision. Watches that lose a second a century, trains that apologise for being forty seconds late, pocket knives with more attachments than some hardware stores. And yet the average student's career plan is a vibe, a LinkedIn account with a blurry photo, and a vague promise to "figure it out after graduation". Spoiler: after graduation arrives faster than the SBB timetable, and it does not wait for you to feel ready.

The good news is that career planning is not a personality trait you either have or lack. It is a toolkit. AELO Swiss Academy gives you the skills; the tools below help you aim them at something specific instead of firing talent into the fog. None of them require money you don't have, and only a couple require more effort than scrolling. Let's open the drawer.

a career is a project, so treat it like one

Here is a pattern I see constantly, and I mean constantly. Students plan group projects down to the font size, then treat their own futures like a group project they forgot existed until the night before. The result is a final-semester scramble: forty applications fired off in a panic, a CV that has never met a proofreader, and interviews approached with the energy of a hostage situation.

The fix is embarrassingly small. One hour a week. That is the entire secret. Swiss watchmakers obsess over fractions of a second; you only need sixty minutes of weekly attention to move from "drifting" to "steering". The tools that follow are what you do inside that hour, and the order matters: know yourself, package yourself, then point yourself at the market. Skipping step one is why so many people end up in careers that fit like borrowed shoes.

look in the mirror first, because the market will anyway

Self-assessment tools get a bad reputation because people treat them like horoscopes with extra steps. Used properly, they are compasses, not GPS. They will not tell you where to go, but they will tell you which direction is roughly "you".

Start with the free options. The O*NET Interest Profiler, built by the US Department of Labor, takes about twenty minutes and sorts your interests into realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional buckets. It is American, but career interests do not need a visa. 16Personalities is free, fast, and weirdly entertaining, which is exactly why you should take it with a grain of salt rather than tattoo the result on your identity. If you want something with more muscle, CliftonStrengths costs about as much as a very nice dinner and gives you a ranked list of your actual strengths instead of flattering adjectives.

The cheapest tool, though, is a notebook. Write down three moments from your studies, internships, or odd jobs where you felt genuinely good at something. Not happy, good. Patterns show up fast. One student I mentored discovered that every "proud moment" involved explaining complicated things to confused people. She stopped applying for back-office roles and started aiming at client-facing ones. Two interviews later, an offer. The tests opened the door; the notebook pointed at it.

your CV: Swiss conventions, Europass, and one tasteful template

Swiss CVs have their own quiet culture, and ignoring it costs interviews. Keep it to one or two pages. A photo is still common on Swiss applications, though international companies care less, so make it a professional photo rather than the one from your cousin's wedding. References matter here in a way they don't everywhere, which we will return to later, because Switzerland takes paperwork as seriously as punctuality.

For the document itself, you have three sane options. Europass is free, EU-standard, and about as exciting as muesli, which is precisely its charm: structured, readable, and impossible to misinterpret. Canva templates look gorgeous and suit design-adjacent fields, but understand the [Aelo Swiss](#) trade-off: many companies run applications through tracking software, and that software reads your artistic masterpiece the way a customs officer reads a crumpled passport, looking for trouble. So keep two versions. A beautiful one for humans, a plain one for robots. The third option is a simple, clean document in Google Docs or Word, and honestly, for most industries it wins.

One anecdote with a moral. A student I know sent an identical CV to thirty openings and heard back twice. She then rebuilt it around the keywords that appeared repeatedly in her target postings, same facts, different packaging, and the reply rate tripled. Recruiters skim for matches. Give them the matches.

LinkedIn, or the networking event where nobody makes eye contact

LinkedIn is unavoidable, so you might as well be good at it. Recruiters search by keyword, which means your headline and About section are not biography, they are search engine real estate. "Student at AELO Swiss Academy" is technically true and commercially useless. "Supply chain student at AELO Swiss Academy, internship experience in logistics, fluent in English and German" is a headline that shows up in searches.

The maintenance load is lighter than people fear. Twenty minutes a week: refresh your headline if your focus shifted, post or comment once so you exist in the feed, and send a handful of connection requests to people who have jobs you want, with a one-line note that says why. Alumni respond far more often than strangers, so mine the AELO Swiss Academy network first. Nobody expects an essay. "You made the switch from hospitality into analytics, that's the move I'm considering, could I ask you two questions?" outperforms any pickup line the internet has produced.

job boards and salary intel for the Swiss market

For actual openings, the Swiss market runs on a handful of boards. jobs.ch is among the biggest, jobscout24 is a solid companion, and Indeed covers the long tail. LinkedIn doubles as a board, obviously. Two habits separate professionals from browsers here.

First, search in more than one language. Postings in German and French regularly never appear in English, and roles advertised in English attract a different, more international crowd. Searching both doubles your surface area and tells you something useful about which segment you are actually competing in.

Second, read postings like a researcher, not a shopper. After ten listings for your target role, the same requirements keep surfacing. That list is your gap analysis, free of charge. For salary expectations, Glassdoor has Swiss data, and the major job boards publish salary guides and calculators. Remember that Swiss pay varies sharply by canton and sector, so a Zurich figure tells you little about a Valais reality, and vice versa. Ranges, not decimals. Anyone quoting you a precise number for "a salary in Switzerland" is guessing in a nice font.

the unglamorous tools that quietly win: calendar, tracker, journal

Now for the part nobody puts on Instagram. A calendar, a spreadsheet, and a journal will outperform most paid career platforms, because they convert intention into repetition. Here is the weekly career hour in full. Defend it like a dentist appointment.



- Block one recurring hour in your calendar and treat attendance as non-negotiable
- Update your tracker: applications sent, replies received, and the next step for each
- Send two thoughtful connection requests or one informational interview request
- Read three postings in your target field and note any requirement you keep missing
- Write three sentences in a journal about what worked, what stung, and what's next

The tracker can be a spreadsheet with five columns: company, date sent, contact person, status, next step. That is it. Its power is not in the formatting but in the fact that after eight weeks you can see patterns, like the uncomfortable truth that all your replies came from applications where you'd tailored the CV. The journal catches the other data, the emotional kind. After every interview, write what they asked and how you felt. Three months later you will have a personalised interview prep guide no course could sell you.

informational interviews: the cheat code almost nobody uses

An informational interview is a twenty-minute chat with someone whose job interests you, and it is the highest return activity in this entire article. Most people never do it because asking a stranger for time feels presumptuous. It isn't. People love talking about their work; they just don't love being pitched at. Make it explicit that you are asking for insight, not a job, and acceptance rates soar.

Request by message, keep it short, offer flexibility, and arrive with questions sharper than "so what's it like?". These five will carry you a long way.

- How did you get from where I am now to the seat you're sitting in?
- What does a normal Tuesday actually look like in your role?
- Which skill do you wish you had picked up earlier?
- Who else should I talk to, and would you be comfortable introducing me?
- If you were starting your career in Switzerland today, what would you do differently?

Afterwards, send a thank-you note the same day, tell them what you did with the advice a few weeks later, and stay lightly in touch. That last question, by the way, regularly surfaces things no job posting will ever mention, like

which certifications actually get respected and which are wallpaper.

internships, references, and the sacred Swiss paperwork

Switzerland has a document culture, and students who understand it gain a quiet edge. The most important artefact is the Arbeitszeugnis, the detailed reference letter Swiss employers issue when you leave a role. It is not a formality; future employers read it closely, including the coded language. So while you are in any internship or part-time job, keep an achievements file from day one. Every project, every number, every compliment in writing. When the reference letter is drafted, concrete material makes it specific, and specific beats generic every time.

Also learn your contract basics early. Statutory notice periods in Switzerland run one month during your first year of employment, two in the second, and three thereafter, unless your contract says something different. Knowing this changes how you plan job transitions later, and being the candidate who understands notice periods makes you look reassuringly adult. Finally, keep every certificate scanned and organised in one cloud folder. When an application asks for proof at short notice, organised people answer in ten minutes and disorganised people answer in ten days.

skills insurance: portfolios, languages, and honest micro-credentials

Depending on where you're headed, a portfolio can outweigh your grades. Code goes on GitHub, design work on Behance, writing and projects anywhere a clean Google Drive folder with a clear structure can live. The point is evidence. "Strong communication skills" is an opinion; a link to the campaign you actually built is a fact.

Languages are Switzerland's compound interest. If you are studying in English, adding solid German or French multiplies the share of the market you can even apply to. Duolingo gets you started and Babbel gets you structured, but the real accelerator is forcing yourself into low-stakes conversation, however clumsy. Language certificates help, though the interview will test you anyway, so build the skill, not just the badge.

On micro-credentials, a word of experienced judgment: certificates are not Pokémon, and you do not need to catch them all. Free options from providers like Google and HubSpot are fine signals of initiative, especially early on, but one certificate in a skill your ten sample job postings repeatedly demand beats five certificates in skills that merely sound impressive. Check the postings first. Then pick one. Finish it.

ask for help before the panic semester, not during it

Career services offices are like dentists: cheaper and far less painful when you visit early. The students who show up in their first year, awkward questions and all, graduate with mock interviews behind them, contacts in hand, and a CV that has survived professional review. The students who arrive in the final semester get triage. Both are served; only one is served well.

Mentors and instructors count too. Faculty members with industry backgrounds know who is hiring and, more importantly, who is worth working for. Alumni events at AELO Swiss Academy are essentially pre-warmed informational interviews, since everyone in the room has already agreed to be helpful by showing up. Go, even when you feel underqualified. Everyone in the room once felt underqualified. That is the entire reason the room exists.

pick three tools and start this week

You do not need all of this at once, and attempting all of it at once is how people end up optimising their LinkedIn banner instead of their actual prospects. Pick three: one mirror tool, one packaging tool, one market tool. Give them your weekly hour for a month. Adjust. The Swiss watch works because every small gear turns reliably, not because of one dramatic spring.

Careers are built the same way. A blocked hour here, a twenty-minute chat there, a spreadsheet that quietly accumulates evidence that you are moving. Do that for a semester and the panic version of graduation simply never happens to you. And you will have something better than a plan: a habit. Switzerland would approve.