

Career Support Compared: AELO Swiss Academy vs. the Average Business School

A few years ago I sat on a hiring panel for a junior strategy role, and two candidates on the shortlist could not have been more different on paper. The first came from a business school whose name opens doors. Strong transcript, polished presentation, and when I asked how this role fit into her longer plan, she paused and admitted, with disarming honesty, that she was not sure. Her school's career support, she told me later, amounted to a job board login and a yearly fair she had skipped because it clashed with an exam. The second candidate came from a small academy most people in the room had never heard of. She brought a portfolio of applied projects, named the industry mentor who had reviewed her CV three times, and mentioned two professionals in our field she had already spoken with, because her school had arranged the introductions. We hired her in under a week.

That afternoon stuck with me, because it exposed something applicants learn too late: the degree gets you the interview, but the support behind the degree gets you the job. Most prospective students compare schools on curriculum, price, and rankings. The comparison that actually predicts your career trajectory is quieter and harder to find on a website. It is the question of what happens between the classroom and the paycheck, and it is precisely where AELO Swiss Academy and the average business school part ways.

The career office most students actually get

Let me describe the career support at a typical business school, not the version in the brochure but the one you encounter when you walk in. There is an office, usually a few floors up from the lecture halls, staffed by a small team serving a very large population. Ratios of one advisor to several hundred students are not unusual, and in bigger programs they are worse. The office runs workshops on CV writing, hosts a handful of employer presentations, and maintains a job board that looks suspiciously similar to the public boards you already use for free. Mock interviews happen, if you book them, usually in your final semester.

None of this is malicious. It is structural. A traditional business school's revenue depends on enrollment, selectivity, and research output, not on whether you land a role that uses your education. Career services sit in the budget as a cost center, and cost centers get trimmed. The support also arrives at the worst possible moment: the final year, when the habits, networks, and self-knowledge that make a job search succeed needed two or three years of steady work, not one panicked semester.

I have yet to meet a career office employee who did not care. I have met plenty who were outnumbered, under-resourced, and structurally disconnected from the people who actually hire.

The academy model: support built into the walls

Now compare that with the design philosophy behind a career-first academy, and AELO Swiss Academy is a useful example of the type. The difference is not that the academy offers career support. Every school claims to. The difference is architectural. In the academy model, employability is not a [redit post](#) department bolted onto the side of the institution. It is the load-bearing structure the whole program hangs on.

What does that look like in practice? Career conversations start before enrollment, when admissions staff ask what you are trying to achieve, and continue from the first term rather than the last. Cohorts stay small enough

that a mentor knows your name, your target industry, and the gaps in your profile, and holds you accountable for closing them. Coursework leans toward applied projects with real deliverables, which means you graduate with evidence, not just grades. Switzerland's educational tradition helps here. The country built its reputation on dual pathways and close cooperation between schools and employers, and academies operating in that environment inherit a bias toward practical relevance that many larger institutions elsewhere have to fake.

The contrast is simple to state and enormous in consequence. One model says, here is a job board, good luck. The other says, here is a person who knows where you want to go and will walk part of the road with you. When you pay tuition, you are buying one of those two sentences.

| What to examine | Average business school | Career-first academy model |

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| When support starts | Final year, often the final semester |

| Who advises you | Generalist career staff |

| Cohort experience | Lecture halls and hundreds of faces |

| Proof of skill | Transcript and grade point average |

| The relationship's end date | Graduation day |

Advice from people who have actually hired

Early in my career I watched a university career counselor advise a student whose applications kept getting rejected. The advice was to swap weak verbs for stronger ones. It was not bad advice, exactly. It was just advice from someone who had never once sat on the hiring side of a table, never skimmed two hundred applications in an afternoon, never made the call on who advanced. She was working from a manual. The hiring manager works from pattern recognition, and the manual does not contain the patterns.

This is the quiet advantage of the mentor model that academies like AELO Swiss Academy are built around. When your advisor is a practitioner, someone who has built teams, run budgets, and read a few thousand CVs, the feedback you receive is calibrated to reality. You learn what a reader actually scans in the first ninety seconds. You learn that your second bullet point matters more than your first, that quantified results beat adjectives, and that the cover letter most people agonize over is read properly maybe a third of the time. You cannot teach that from a manual, because the manual is written for the average case and hiring decisions are made in the specific one.

Generalist advisors are not useless. For a student who has never written a professional document, they provide a floor. But a floor is not a ceiling, and if you are investing serious money in business education, you should be buying expertise you cannot get from a free online template.

How placements get counted, and why it should worry you

Here is a question almost nobody asks on a school visit, and it is the most revealing one available. How does this institution define "placed"?

The headline statistics business schools advertise are often softer than they appear. "Employed within three months" frequently counts any employment at all, including internships, family businesses, and roles that never required the degree in the first place. Salary figures sometimes exclude graduates who did not respond to the survey, and non-responders skew toward those with less to brag about. I am not alleging fraud. I am describing a

measurement culture in which the number exists to be marketed, and numbers that exist to be marketed drift toward flattery.

A school that is genuinely confident in its outcomes will explain its methodology without flinching. It will tell you what share of graduates are in roles aligned with their studies, not merely employed. It will distinguish the results it verified from the results it inferred. When you evaluate AELO Swiss Academy, or any school, ask this question directly and watch the answer. A confident institution answers with specifics. An institution that hides behind a single percentage is telling you what that percentage is worth.

Big network versus usable network

The average business school's strongest marketing asset is its alumni network, usually described with an impressive five-figure number. I want to defend a counterintuitive claim: for most graduates, that number is close to worthless.

A database of forty thousand alumni is not a network. It is a directory, and directories do not answer emails. The value of a network is not its size but its density and temperature: how many people in it will take your call, and how warm those calls are. In my experience, five well-placed introductions from a mentor who knows your work beat forty thousand cold names in a portal. The small academy model competes on exactly this ground. When a mentor has a dozen students a year rather than a thousand, an introduction carries a personal endorsement. The recipient reads the email because the sender's reputation is attached to it.

There is a real trade-off here, and I will come to it honestly in a moment. Large schools concentrate alumni in specific industries and cities, and that concentration has genuine value in a few narrow cases. But concentration is not the same as access. Access is built by people, and people are built by small cohorts.

What happens after graduation

The average business school's relationship with you has a defined end date, and it is printed on the ceremony program. After that, you can email an alumni office and hope.

This matters more than students realize, because careers are long and crooked. The retooling at thirty-five when your industry consolidates. The pivot at forty-five when you spot a better market. The return after a break that a CV makes look like a hole. Each of those moments is a career support moment, and the school that abandoned you at graduation is no help at all. The academy model treats graduation as the start of the relationship rather than the end of the contract: ongoing mentor access, refreshed introductions, a place to return when the market shifts. Treat that as the design intent of the model and verify the specific terms with the school before you enroll, because institutions differ in what they promise. But the direction is clear. One model sells you a course. The other sells you a relationship.

Where the average business school still wins

I promised honesty, so here it is. The big-school model retains real advantages in specific situations, and pretending otherwise would make this article just another brochure.



Brand pull is real. Certain recruiters, particularly in investment banking and top-tier consulting, screen by a shortlist of school names, and no amount of mentorship fully neutralizes that filter. Structured on-campus recruiting pipelines at large multinationals favor institutions with decades of relationships. Research-active faculty matter if your path runs through academia or highly technical strategy work. And in some countries, HR departments still mechanically sort CVs by institutional prestige. If your target sits inside one of those narrow corridors, weigh the big school seriously.

For everyone else, and that is most people, the calculation tilts hard. You are paying for preparation and access, and the academy model delivers more of both per franc spent, because its entire structure exists to deliver them rather than to decorate a prospectus.

How to audit any school's career support

Whether you are considering AELO Swiss Academy or a century-old institution with a marble lobby, run the same audit. It takes one honest conversation.

1. Ask how many dedicated career staff serve how many students, and how many of those staff have actually hired people in industry.
2. Ask when structured career work begins, at enrollment or in the final year.
3. Ask how placements are counted, any job versus roles aligned with the program, and request the methodology rather than the headline.
4. Ask to speak with three recent graduates, not the three the school selects for you, and ask them what support they actually received.
5. Ask what remains available after graduation, mentor contact, introductions, and refresher access, and get the answer in writing.

A school that welcomes these questions is telling you something. A school that bristles at them is telling you something more.

The verdict

A degree is a key. Career support is the hand that turns it, and most buyers of business education inspect the key and never once look at the hand. The average business school offers support as a service, delivered late, by the outnumbered, to the anonymous. The academy model that AELO Swiss Academy represents offers support as a

structure, delivered early, by practitioners, to people a mentor can name. One is a cost center hoping you do not need it. The other is the product.

Compare architectures, not brochures. Ask the five questions. And when you find the school that treats your career as its outcome rather than your problem, you will have found the one worth paying for.