

European Commission
Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
Economic Policy Committee

**Efficiency and effectiveness of public
expenditure
on tertiary education in the EU**

**ANNEX : COUNTRY FICHE
AUSTRIA**

**Joint Report by the Economic Policy Committee
(Quality of Public Finances)
and the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs**

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Brief characterization of the tertiary education system

1. Main features

Tertiary education in Austria is provided by (22) Public Universities, (19) Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*), (12) Private Universities, (14) University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*), Academies and Colleges in general.¹

Relevant for the tertiary education system in Austria is the Universities Act 2002 (UA, *Universitätsgesetz 2002*) which entered into full force on 1 January 2004 and the Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education 2005 (*Hochschulgesetz 2005*, see more details under 2 (iv)). The UA 2002 is based on the principles of New Public Management with its premises of increased autonomy, output orientation and performance-based funding. In due course of the implementation of the UA 2002 universities now have the status of legal entities in public law (as opposed to the status of so-called “subordinate organisations” before the reform). The state, represented by the responsible Ministry (Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research), still plays a statutory supervisory role. Otherwise universities are autonomous in adjusting organisational structures and in personnel management. New control instruments such as global budgets and performance agreements were also introduced by the UA 2002. The allocation of financial resources is based on a performance agreement and a formula-based mechanism which partly rests on predefined performance indicators. Moreover, due to larger autonomy and stronger competition, universities will increase their share of funds from competitive grants and industry.

The tertiary education system is since 2006 structured following the Bologna guidelines in Bachelor’s degrees, Master’s degrees and Doctoral degrees (other structures still fade out). Precondition for studying at a higher education institution in Austria is the school leaving examination (*Matura*) successfully completed at a higher secondary level school. Students can choose their field of study freely. Though, for some specific programmes additional studies-related exams are necessary. For certain studies concrete qualifying examinations are a prerequisite. In the area of medical studies currently a quota regulation is in force, which regulates the inflow of students in this certain area. Those persons who wish to study at a university or at a college of higher education and do not have the required school leaving examination, may complete specific exams which entitle them for higher education.

¹ Whereas the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research is responsible for tertiary education in Austria in general, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture is specifically accountable for University Colleges of Teacher Education.

1/ TEACHING		Austria										
		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Academic staff per 1000 inhabitants relative to the average		1.8	2.02	:	2.01	2.02	2.08	1.87	1.85	:	2.07	:
Number of students per 1000 inhabitants		31	31.6	32.6	32.9	27.7	28.3	29.2	29.7	:30.6	31.4	:
Number of students (graduate and post-graduate) per 1000 inhabitants		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	<i>From public institutions</i>	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	<i>From private government-dependent institutions</i>	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	<i>From private independent institutions</i>	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Ratio of students per academic staff		17.2	15.6	:	16.4	13.7	13.6	15.6	16.1	:	15.2	:
Number of graduates per 1000 inhabitants		3.55	2.24	3.34	3.6	2.61	3.86	4.05	4.01	4.21	4.39	:
Ratio of graduates per 1000 academic staff		2.0	1.1	:	1.8	1.3	1.9	2.2	2.2	:	2.1	:
Standardized recruiter view indicator (graduates' employability as perceived by recruiters)		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.26	:	:	:
Standardized peer view country indicator (quality perceptions among peers)		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.59	:	:	:
PISA scores		:	:	514	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Average total time spent by students in order to obtain a BA degree		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Average total time spent by students in order to obtain a MA degree		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Remuneration of a tenured university professor with 10 year seniority		53,1	53,3	55,2	55,9	56,7	57,8	58,9	60,2	61,6	62,4	64,1
2/ RESEARCH		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Publications per 1000 inhabitants		0.69	0.74	0.74	0.79	0.78	0.82	0.84	0.87	:	:	:
		1998-2002	1999-2003	2000-2004	2001-2005	2002-2006	2003-2007					
Quality of research (position in the ISI citation index)		4.35	4.66	4.77	5.16	:	:					
% of research done in cooperation with industry		:	:	:	:	:	:					
3/ EXPLANATORY FACTORS FOUND RELEVANT FOR EFFICIENCY		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Main categories of composite indicator												
	Funding Rules Indicator	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	5.5	:
	Evaluation Indicator	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	5.1	:
	Staff Policy Indicator	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	10	:
4/ EXPENDITURE		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total public expenditure on tertiary education institutions as a percentage of GDP		1.44	1.43	1.19	1.18	1.12	1.14	1.22	1.30	1.3	:	:
Total expenditure per student (€)		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Private expenditure on tertiary education institutions as a percentage of		:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

GDP												
Total expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	5.80	5.79	5.66	5.70	5.67	5.50	5.44	5.5	5.5	:	:	
Private expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	0.39	0.30	0.33	0.32	0.38	0.30	0.39	0.4	0.4	:	:	
Funds from non-public sources as % of total income (fees, earned income, investment, other)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	
Tuition fees as average of the cost of tuition	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	44%	:	:	
Percentage of funds received by private government-dependent institutions from public sources	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	
Total public expenditure on grants, loans, and other programmes to cover education and/or maintenance of students (universal programmes / by categories such as merit or socio-economic status)	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	

Source: Eurostat, OECD, UOE and Member States.

2. Structure of institutions and funding arrangements

(i) Public (Universities)

Since the UG 2002 (Universities Act 2002) came into effect for Austrian universities on January 1st 2004 Austrian universities have the status of legal entities in public law. This means that while they are independent entities in terms of legal and operational control, they receive about 75% of their funding directly from the Austrian government. The remaining 25% of the funding are acquired through public research funding, study fees and private funding.

Universities are funded by the State. They receive a global budget; that means they are free to use the amount of money they receive at their own discretion, as long as they spend it within the limits of their duties and according to the performance agreement.

The global budget consists of two parts, a basic budget and a formula based budget. The formula based budget amounts to 20% of the global overall budget and is being calculated with qualitative and quantitative indicators. Those indicators relate to teaching, research and the achievement of social goals (such indicators are for example: the number of graduates, the income from research projects or the proportion of female professors, etc.).

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen, FH*)

In 1990 the Austrian Federal Government decided to set up the FH sector (=Universities of Applied Sciences). Apart from the goal, written down in the government accord, of diversifying higher education, increasing transparency and harmonising the Austrian education system with the systems existing in other EU Member States, another important

educational goal of the government was to strengthen the independence and accountability of the educational institutions for the purpose of increasing the quality and efficiency of the courses offered. By reducing the innumerable laws and decrees pertaining to the organisation of higher-education institutions and the courses they offer, the intention was to boost innovation in the educational sector, increase flexibility vis-à-vis the employment sector and make it easier to meet general social requirements.

The objectives and guiding principles are as follows:

- ensuring a practice-oriented education at university level;
- imparting the ability to solve problems in the respective profession according to the state of the art and practical requirements;
- promoting permeability of the educational system and of the professional flexibility of the graduates.

University of Applied Sciences degree programmes may be provided by the Federal Government and other legal entities under public law (= local authorities). Legal entities under private law may provide University of Applied Sciences degree programmes if the primary object of their business is establishing, providing and operating University of Applied Sciences degree programmes.

University of Applied Sciences degree programmes shall have to pay attention to the multiplicity of scientific theories and scientific methodologies; the principle of freedom of teaching shall refer to the organisation of courses within the scope of the teaching objectives to be attained and the presentation of content and methods. The provider is responsible for the budget (capital, non-personnel and personnel expenditures; autonomy).

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

The objectives and guiding principles are:

- The studies on Private Universities must offer study programmes or units of such, in one or more scientific or artistic disciplines, leading to an academic degree of international standard, awarded for fulltime study programmes of at least three years duration, or study programmes in continuation of such programmes. The initial application for accreditation must be accompanied by the curricula of the planned study programmes;
- Freedom of scientific and artistic activity (autonomy);
- Dissemination of the arts and their teaching;
- Interaction between research and teaching;
- Diversity of academic and artistic theories, methods and doctrines.

The decision on applications for a withdrawal of accreditation of a Private University shall be by means of an official notification issued by the Austrian Accreditation Council (ÖAR). The decision of the ÖAR shall be subject to the approval of the Federal Minister prior to the issue of the official notification. For Private Universities exists a prohibition of federal funding, a funding by other regional or local authorities or by businesses is allowed.

(iv) University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*)

The Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education of 2005 (*Hochschulgesetz 2005*) is the legal framework for University Colleges of Teacher Education. This Act has transformed the former teacher training academies into University Colleges of Teacher Education which now offer bachelor degree programmes with 180 ECTS-credits.

There are nine Public University Colleges of Teacher Education and five private ones. Private Universities Colleges of Teacher Education (as well as private special study programmes, e.g. catholic university colleges for education, Islamic and Jewish religious communities) must apply for accreditation and thus fulfil respective legal requirements.

Within a timeframe of at least six semesters University Colleges of Teacher Education provide education and training for graduates from higher secondary schools that qualify them to teach at compulsory schools of general education. In addition to courses in theory of education special emphasis is also put on gaining practical experience in schools.

3. Governance and regulatory framework

(i) Universities

The mutual duties of the universities and the state are written down in performance agreements. Performance agreements are concluded by the Minister and the rector of each university. They are valid for three years. On the one hand they contain the services the university has to provide and the objectives the university wants to reach during this period of time. On the other hand they contain the amount of money the university will receive from the state in this three year period. Contents of the performance agreement are for example the study programmes, research projects and social goals such as an increased internationalisation or the promotion of women (e.g. the goal to appoint more female professors).

The Minister does have supervisory functions. That means he has the right to get any information in all matters and fields concerning the university and its actions. He also has the right to reverse decisions taken by organs of the university if they are against the law. Content of the right to supervision is also that the university has the duty to give a report each year to the Minister. This report has to provide information if the objectives laid down in the performance agreement were accomplished. In addition the university has to submit an annual

financial statement which also has to include the balance sheet. The Minister on the other hand has to report to the parliament at least every three years and has to give information about the development of the universities to the parliament.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

Regulatory framework conditions: When the *Fachhochschule* Studies Act (*Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz*; FHSStG as amended) entered into force on 1 October 1993, a control mechanism that was innovative for the Austrian higher education system was created, which provides excellent conditions for setting up and expanding the Austrian FH sector. In order to give higher-education institutions institutional autonomy vis-à-vis the government, the relationship between government and higher-education institutions was also remodelled. The educational framework conditions on which the FHSStG is based are characterised by the following features:

- The monopoly of the state as provider of higher education was abolished and the institutions were given greater autonomy to organise themselves;
- Redistribution of the rights of disposal due to the private form of organisation of the course-providing bodies and, consequently, more independence, responsibility and flexibility for the providers of education;
- Decentralisation of the decision-making processes, i.e. the relevant decisions are made where most of the knowledge and information is pooled;
- The tasks of the state were limited to external quality assurance (FH Council) and financing.

Within the regulatory framework conditions, the Austrian FH sector is being set up and expanded in co-operation with official top-down control and private bottom-up initiative. Education in *Fachhochschulen* is not offered by transforming existing institutions but by accrediting new degree programmes.

Financing: FH degree programmes are funded differently from higher-education institutions. Greater emphasis is placed on economic aspects by offering incentives to employees on the level where objective decisions are made in order to manage the scarce resources more efficiently. Based on the individual applicable FH development and financing plan, the government undertakes to fund an agreed number of student places. This is the financing concept for the management of student places. The key figure for financing FH degree programmes is the cost per student place. Part of a background report drawn up for the OECD was used to compute these costs. To create incentives for mixed financing systems, the government funds only about 90 per cent of the annual standard costs for a student place (i.e. EUR 7,940 for technical and EUR 6,510 to 6,990 for other degree programmes).

Pursuant to a resolution of the Austrian National Council of 23 November 2000, the course-providing bodies are entitled to collect tuition fees in the amount of EUR 363,36 per semester.

Educational mandate: FH degree programmes offer vocational training and practice oriented courses at higher-education level. This means that the education offered qualifies the graduates for a profession, and the curricula of the courses are designed in such a way that the graduates will stand a reasonable chance of finding a job that matches their qualifications. The basic concept for an FH degree programme has to describe the connection between the vocational fields of activity, the related qualification profile and the curriculum, which is a reflection of the qualification profile, and these connections have to be demonstrated in the teaching concept as well. The high priority given to teaching concepts in the FH sector is not least due to the fact that FH degree programmes have to put into practice the educational mandate of a practice-oriented vocational training at higher-education level subject to time constraints. By putting the educational mandate of the Austrian FH degree programmes and *Fachhochschulen* in writing, the FH Council expresses its commitment to teaching the students skills that can be put to good use in the labour market. The educational requirement for admission to a University of Applied Sciences bachelor degree programme shall be the general university entrance qualification or a subject-relevant professional qualification. If the scientific and didactic concept is based on professional experience, admission to such a degree programme may be limited to an appropriate target group.

Quality assurance in the FH sector: The FH Council is the authority responsible for external quality assurance. Quality assurance for education offered by the *Fachhochschulen* is of utmost importance in the Austrian FH sector. The high priority of quality assurance is a result of the modern regulatory framework conditions. In order to decentralise decision-making processes and deregulate the laws pertaining to the organisation of higher-education institutions and the courses they offer, education providers with a high degree of autonomy for self-organisation were created; they are organised under private law but are primarily publicly financed. Austria was one of the first European countries that introduced an accreditation system for the FH sector. The Austrian FH sector has wholly integrated external quality assurance. This means that initial accreditation, evaluation and re-accreditation are all connected. In other words, a new FH degree programme, first of all, needs to be accredited by the FH Council, with the accreditation granted in each case for a maximum of five years. After this approval period a re-accreditation is required, which follows an evaluation and a formal follow-up procedure.

Explanatory notes: The staff policy is part of the autonomy of the University of Applied Sciences; the definition of the research priorities is arranged in the development-plan for the Universities of Applied Sciences, which is compiled in cooperation with the providers, the University of Applied Science Council and the federal government. The University of Applied Science Council is also the authority competent for the accreditation of Universities of Applied Sciences degree programmes.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

The legal basis for Private Universities in Austria is the University Accreditation Act (UniAkkG 1999). To obtain accreditation as a private university the educational institution submitting the application must fulfil the objectives and guiding principles, as mentioned under point 2. For the duration of accreditation the educational institution shall be entitled to refer to itself as a Private University. The Private University and persons working there shall be entitled to use designations and titles associated with higher education, in all cases with the addendum “of the private university”. The Private University shall, further, be entitled to award academic degrees to graduates of the study programmes offered by it, even with the same denominations as foreseen for academic degrees by the Public Universities.

For Private Universities exists a prohibition of federal funding, the financing of Private Universities depends therefore on tuition fees and grants from other regional and local authorities and private companies. The staff policy, control over distribution of resources, study programmes, restrictions to entry into academic fields, student choice, definition of research priorities, creation of new institutions, evaluation and accountability is part of the autonomy of the Private University and of the Austrian Accreditation Council.

(iv) Public University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*)

Public University Colleges of Teacher Education are accredited public post-secondary education providers which qualify graduates from higher secondary schools to teach at compulsory schools of general education. These institutions have legal personality as they are entitled to contribute on their own behalf and own account to the fulfilment of the tasks of University Colleges of Teacher Education. Rectorates of each single Public University College of Teacher Education are obliged to provide a strategic plan on goals and planned performances, which is enacted by the University Council and approved by the responsible member of government.

All institutions of Public University Colleges of Teacher Education are subject to the surveillance of the responsible member of government what regards the fulfilment of the effective legislative provisions. Thus, decisions taken by institutions of Public University Colleges of Teacher Education can be abrogated. E.g. curricula are to be abrogated by the relevant member of government if they do not fulfil legal requirements or if their financial impacts cannot be covered.

4. System's strengths and weaknesses

(i) Universities

The strengths of Universities are:

- Autonomy in hiring
- Flexibility in recruitment and in designing labour contracts (though given minimum requirements due to the collective bargaining agreements)
- Possibility of individual career path designing, open-ended hiring, assessment of qualification, etc.
- Flexibility in using public financial resources (global budget)
- Possibility to raise and to use additional (private) funds
- Public funds are bound to performance agreements (control instrument)
- Autonomy in deciding upon the supply and design of studies (fast adjustment to new trends and developments and possible inclusion of requirements of future employers)
- Widely free access to universities
- Early orientation within fields of study, due to partly unified study starting phases (early identification of having chosen the right/wrong study)

The weaknesses of Universities are:

- Inhomogeneous contracts of labour across and within universities
- Lower (public) transparency
- Lower ability to control within the 3 year period (= performance agreement period)
- Little contribution by private households/students
- lower transparency and comparability of study course offer
- more complicated predictability of the number of students which is the basis for defining the public resources

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

The strengths of the Universities of Applied Sciences are:

- ensuring a practice-oriented education at university level
- imparting the ability to solve problems in the respective profession according to the state of the art and practical requirements
- promoting permeability of the educational system and of the professional flexibility of the graduates
- The weaknesses of the Universities of Applied Sciences are:

- a fractional lower allotment of research
- a lower allotment of scientists with relevant post-doctoral lecturing qualifications
- a lower allotment of salaried scientist

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

The strengths of the Private Universities are:

- ensuring a market-oriented education at university level
- diversification of the tertiary education system
- The weaknesses of the Private Universities are:
- high tuition fees
- a fractional lower allotment of research
- too small institutions

Explanatory factors for efficiency

1. Staff Policy

1.1. Hiring/Firing

(i) Universities

The Universities Act 2002, which came into force on January 1st, 2004, changed the existing staff policy of universities completely. Academic staff is now employed by each university itself by private employment contracts following private sector rules. The appointment into an employment by the federal government has ceased, just as the commitment to the federal plan of permanent posts (or employment plan) did. Now universities are free to hire within the bounds of their financial capabilities set by the annual “Global Budget” granted by the federal government. Firing follows private sector industrial law and from autumn 2009 will be restricted only by the coming into force of a “collective agreement” applying to university staff.

1.2. Wages

(i) Universities

Since the implementation of the Universities Act 2002 staff wages can be individually determined by each university. In any case wages must be consistent with the “collective agreement” which functions as a minimum standard. That is to say Universities are free to pay more than the legal minimum wage requires.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, Fachhochschulen, FH)

The teaching and research staff at Universities of Applied Sciences consists of persons employed on a full-time or a part-time basis (lecture). One of the tasks of the head of the University of Applied Sciences Board is to give instructions to members of the full-time teaching and research staff as to the nature and extent of the exercise of their teaching assignment as far as this is necessary for the regular management of studies according to the curricula. Further the head has to assign the lectures on the basis of proposals by or consultation of the University of Applied Sciences Board, which consists of teachers and students of the university. The wages can be determined freely.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

It is part of the autonomy of the Private Universities to hire and dismiss academic staff and to deal with personnel matters like duration of contracts. Wages can be determined freely.

2. Output flexibility

2.1. Course content and exams

(i) Universities

The above outlined tasks lie fully in the autonomy of the universities. The senate is the body of the university which is responsible for academic matters. The senate decides for example:

- on the curricula for degree programs,
- on the regulation for the academic titles awarded by the university and
- is also the body where students can appeal to in matters related to studies.

The senate is also the body where all members of the university are represented and take decisions together. That is the professors, the teaching staff other than the professors, the non academic staff and the students are all represented in the senate and work together. Nonetheless the professors have the majority and the students hold 25% of the seats.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, Fachhochschulen, FH)

The basis for all universities in Austria is the principle of freedom of research and teaching (autonomy of the universities). University of Applied Sciences degree programmes have to pay attention to the multiplicity of scientific theories and scientific methodologies; the principle of freedom of teaching refers to the organisation of courses within the scope of the

teaching objectives to be attained and the presentation of content and methods. An accreditation as a University of Applied Sciences degree programme requires that these principles are observed and the courses are offered by a scientifically, professionally and pedagogically-didactically qualified teaching and research staff. The providers have to establish a quality management system for the purpose of service and quality assurance.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

Study programmes on a Private University can only be established by accreditation from the Austrian accreditation Council. Accreditation is a formal and transparent process providing internationally compatible standards to examine whether institutions and/or programmes offered at university level comply with minimum quality requirements. The accreditation process decides on the status and recognition of institutions and academic programmes for a defined period. Accreditation in the field of higher education guarantees society and all involved stakeholders security that the quality of teaching and learning refers to international threshold standards. At the same time accreditation increases the transparency in a complex market of national and international educational providers.

Core functions of accreditation are:

- Protection of students against offers that do not achieve the targets and results (employability, international recognition of degrees etc.);
- Transparency, comparability and therefore increased opportunities at the educational and the labour market both at home and abroad;
- Facilitating of international mobility through mutual recognition of programmes and parts of programmes and improvement of abilities for graduates at the European labour market and
- Implementing fair conditions between educational institutions competing for students as well as for public and private funds.

(iv) Public University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*)

At Public University Colleges of Teacher Education curricula for each single degree programme need to be enacted by a special commission. Public University Colleges of Teacher Education can basically define and develop their own curricula if legal regulations are fulfilled (e.g. Federal Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education). Further, curricula need to comply with European and international degree programme structures and developments in general. Single public University Colleges of Teacher Education are requested to cooperate with each other and with other education and research institutions as Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) when it comes to the fulfilment of their tasks (e.g. R&D, evaluation, development of curricula). This intensified cooperation shall facilitate mutual applicability of degree

programmes (fully or partially). The responsible member of government needs to be informed about the curricula together with the reports on personal and financial resources. Curricula could be abrogated by the relevant member of government if they do not fulfil legal requirements or if their financial impacts cannot be covered.

2.2. Offer of short studies and other diversifies studies

Within the Bologna degree system short study programmes are not offered. The legal regulations for degree programmes (BA, MA, PhD) ("*ordentliche Studien*") prescribes a minimum time for the completion of studies respectively a minimum of ECTS points for all higher education institutions (HEIs).

At universities a bachelor's studies takes at least six semesters (180 ECTS points) for all fields of study, and for the following master's study programmes, four semesters (at least 120 ECTS points). For the majority of diploma programmes, the duration of studies is eight semesters. The time input for *Fachhochschule* studies is specified in ECTS points. *Fachhochschule* bachelor's programmes have been assigned 180 ECTS points, *Fachhochschule* master's programmes 60-120 ECTS points and *Fachhochschule* diploma study programmes 240-300 ECTS points.

Beside the Bologna degree programmes Austrian HEIs offer various forms of short study programmes for continuing education which are targeted on graduates but also to a larger audience, mainly working adults and non-academics. HEIs have the right to determine the admission criteria for these programmes. Continuing education and further training are seen as essential responses of HEIs to the needs for lifelong learning. It promotes an opening up of education due to the recognition of relevant subject-specific qualifications and their orientation to people in employment.

At universities "university courses" and "postgraduate university courses" for continuing education ("*Universitätslehrgänge*") have been established to cater to the needs of working adults and postgraduates. The University for Further Education and Training in Krems ("*Donau-Universität Krems*") specialises on post-graduate further education and training, mainly for working adults and only offers (postgraduate) university courses in the form of "*Universitätslehrgänge*".

Fachhochschulen do offer further education courses ("*Lehrgänge zur Weiterbildung*") in the fields of the FH degree programmes for which they are accredited.

Private universities do offer university courses and postgraduate university courses for continuing education ("*Universitätslehrgänge*"). Courses at non-university institutions (e.g. non-profit institutions of adult education) may be temporarily awarded the status of "university level courses". These courses will phase out by the year 2012.

In general, University Colleges of Teacher Education (public and private) offer degree programmes with 180 ECTS-credits (6 semesters, Bachelor of Education). In line with the legal personality of University Colleges of Teacher Education also degree programmes with more than 120 ECTS-credits can be offered.

2.3. Student choice

The grade of flexibility varies according to the field of study. Curricula do not have to be approved by the Minister of Higher Education. Study programmes are delivered through a modular scheme. Especially continuing education and part-time programmes aim at flexibility for the students.

HEIs are free to offer parts of study programmes (modules) via distance-learning, web-based learning, blended learning etc. to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners. Part-time study programmes are in place at *Fachhochschulen*. At universities the needs of part-time students are taken into account in the organisation of the study programmes (e.g. through modules in the evening or on Saturdays, e-learning).

Flexible learning paths are aiming at eliminating barriers for the transfer of qualifications between schools and HEIs, developing flexible learning paths for part-time students, integrating non-traditional students into *Fachhochschule* programmes.

The Universities Act 2002 provides regulation about the recognition of examinations as well as of specific professional experience and artistic skills.

Examinations passed by students attending recognised Austrian or foreign post-secondary educational institutions, higher vocational colleges, colleges of education, recognised Austrian educational institutions where the general university entrance qualification is an admission requirement, or university-level courses offered by non-university institutions, shall be recognised, provided that such qualifications are equivalent to those prescribed by the curriculum.

Artistic activities at non-university institutions capable of providing vocational artistic training may be recognised as equivalent to examinations if the nature of the activities and the nature and extent of the student's participation is comparable.

In several different ways the *Fachhochschule*-sector takes into account the needs of **non-traditional students**. The requirements of admission to a *Fachhochschule* are the "*allgemeine Universitätsreife*" (general qualifications to enrol in university studies) or any professional qualification in the particular field. Depending on the objectives of a course of study, entrants with special professional qualifications may have to pass a number of

additional examinations. The possible forms of university entrance qualification exam are laid down for each programme.

Qualifications from VET colleges or special professional qualifications can lead to credit transfer of exams in relation to subject specialisation and reductions of the study exams. Credit transfer of individual lectures and exams is incumbent upon *Fachhochschule* institutions.

Furthermore the *Fachhochschulen* are enabled to offer so-called "target group-specific" part-time degree programmes for VET (Vocational Education and Training) colleges graduates that have a particular scientific and teaching concept and are tailor-made for working students of a certain target group. The study period is usually one or two semesters shorter. Part-time *Fachhochschulen* degree programmes are explicitly tailored to the target group of the gainfully employed and are characterised by the fact that the schedule of the degree programme, the curricula, the teaching concept and also the entrance procedure are tailored to the needs and wants of gainfully employed persons.

In total, the percentage of part-time programmes was around 30% in the academic year 2007/08 (e.g. 50% of the master-programmes are accessible for employed persons).

University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) are free to offer parts of study programmes (modules) via distance-learning, web-based learning, blended learning, etc. to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners. Also extra-occupational study programmes (6 semesters) are being offered.

First-year students and students at *Fachhochschulen* Classified according to organisational form, winter semester 2008

	First-year students				Students			Female ratio
	Women	Men	Total	Female ratio	Women	Men	Total	
Extra-occupational	1,661	2,694	4,355	38.1%	4,116	6,614	10,730	38.4%
Austrian	1,475	2,503	3,978	37.1%	3,750	6,221	9,971	37.6%
Foreigners	186	191	377	49.3%	366	393	759	48.2%
Normal	3,926	4,021	7,947	49.4%	11,164	11,369	22,533	49.5%
Austrian	3,383	3,427	6,810	49.7%	9,801	9,791	19,592	50.0%
Foreigners	543	594	1,137	47.8%	1,363	1,578	2,941	46.3%
Target group oriented	99	114	213	46.5%	120	232	352	34.1%
Austrian	95	114	209	45.5%	116	230	346	33.5%
Foreigners	4	0	4	100.0%	4	2	6	66.7%
Total	5,686	6,829	12,515		15,400	18,215	33,615	

Lifelong Learning is becoming more and more an issue for HEIs, but it is still in a development phase. A number of initiatives, in particular extra-occupational study programmes, aim at lifelong learners and are promoted by the government (e.g. through the

current Fachhochschule development and funding plan; universities have to integrate institutional Life Long Learning (LLL)-strategies in their developmental plans and in the performance agreements with the government).

Practising teachers (being educated by University Colleges of Teacher Education) receive in-service training either through autonomous study or by attending training events, with 15 hours being compulsory per year. These in-service training events can be attended during holidays, in the teacher's leisure time or during working hours.

There are no other non-formal qualification requirements in Austria for regular degree studies except of vocational matriculation examinations („Berufsreifeprüfung“), university entrance qualification examinations („Studienberechtigungsprüfung“), occupational qualification with additional examinations within the Fachhochschulen-sector (see I.1.) and admission requirements for artistic studies (for a description of these non-traditional access routes please see 2 answers below). As for postgraduate courses (degree programmes which aim for further education) universities can decide upon admission requirements autonomously.

Candidates for University Colleges of Teacher Education (Pädagogische Hochschulen) must have passed the secondary school leaving examination (Reifeprüfung), or a university entrance qualification examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung) or a vocational matriculation examination (Berufsreifeprüfung). Depending on the concrete study programme further entry qualifications can be required as for instance qualifications being a pre-requisite for practising as a teacher (e.g. knowledge of spoken and written German language).

First-year students at Public Universities, Fachhochschulen and Private Universities being 26 years or older, winter semester 2008

26 years and older	Women	Men	Total	Female ratio
Public Universities	1,216	1,200	2,416	50.3%
Fachhochschulen	1,340	2,402	3,742	35.8%
Private Universities	291	262	553	52.6%

As long as they fulfil the requirements, as mentioned above, tertiary education institutions admit students from non-traditional access routes (for example those who are already graduates in another discipline). There are several ways of alternative entry requirements established regarding HE access besides the "*allgemeine Universitätsreife*" (general qualifications to enrol in university studies):

- “*Berufsreifeprüfung*” (special university entrance qualification): Since 1997, apprenticeship graduates who have successfully passed their apprenticeship examination or have attended a VET school for at least three years are further enabled to take the *Berufsreifeprüfung*. This corresponds to the Certificate of Secondary Education from secondary academic school and the Certificate of Secondary Education and VET diploma from VET colleges and thus includes the general

admission to a course of study. Courses preparing for the *Berufsreifeprüfung* have been extended considerably over the last years.

- “*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*” (university entrance qualification exam): According to the University Qualification Entrance Act this exam is aimed at people without a secondary school leaving certificate. There have to be taken several and different examinations with regard to the chosen programme.
- The possibility of doctoral studies for students in *Fachhochschule* studies according to the Federal Act on the *Fachhochschule* study programmes.
- Continuing education courses: The admission requirements are determined by the HEIs in accordance with the legal framework / accreditation decision and take into account professional experience and prior learning.
- Recognition of vocational qualifications and professional experience at FH-programmes. In individual cases, for qualifications not regulated by the accreditation notification, the definition of the relevant professional qualification and the additional examinations shall be laid down by the head of the teaching and research staff or the University of Applied Sciences Board.
- "target group-specific" *Fachhochschulen*-programmes: part-time degree programmes for VET college graduates that have a particular scientific and teaching concept and are tailored for working students of a certain target group. The study period is usually one or two semesters shorter. Part-time *Fachhochschulen* degree programmes are explicitly tailored to the target group of the gainfully employed and are characterised by the fact that the schedule of the degree programme, the curricula, the teaching concept and also the entrance procedure are tailored to the needs and wants of gainfully employed persons.

On a national basis there are no procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) so far, but some procedures / foundations are in place for certain types of programmes (*Fachhochschulen*-programmes and continuing education courses). In the ongoing development of a national Life Long Learning-strategy and the NQF procedures for recognizing RPL on a national basis are discussed.

2.4. Numerus clausus

Admission to bachelor's and master's degree, diploma and doctoral degree programmes in Medicine, Psychology, Veterinary Medicine and Dental Medicine, (in past years also in Business Administration, Communication Studies and Journalism, Biology and Pharmacy)

may be limited by means either of an admission procedure prior to admission or of selection up to two semesters after admission at the latest.

(i) Universities

They do not have autonomy to decide on the (in) existence of constraints associated with numerus clausus.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

The providers of the University of Applied Sciences have the possibility to arrange acceptance tests if there are more candidates than student places available for a certain degree programme.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

Private Universities have the possibility to arrange acceptance tests if there are more candidates than student places available for a certain degree programme (university entrance examination).

(iv) University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*)

They do not have autonomy to decide on the (in) existence of constraints associated with numerus clausus.

2.5. Regional/ European/ global mobility

Domestic students enrolled in degree programmes according to origin (Austrian provinces), winter semester 2008

	Austrian students enrolled in degree programmes							Study in a different province	in %
	Kärnten	Ober-österreich	Salzburg	Steiermark	Tirol	Wien	Total		
Wien	163	551	114	478	161	52,513	53,980	1,467	2.72
Vorarlberg	25	173	115	319	2,716	2,205	5,553	5,553	100.00
Tirol	71	179	396	685	10,900	1,267	13,498	2,598	19.25
Steiermark	340	406	257	23,246	121	3,270	27,640	4,394	15.90
Salzburg	74	368	5,246	1,349	1,265	2,225	10,527	5,281	50.17
Oberösterreich	79	8,918	3,620	2,868	1,149	9,984	26,618	17,700	66.50
Niederösterreich	52	973	196	706	177	26,266	28,370	28,370	100.00
Kärnten	5,470	322	233	4,600	271	3,527	14,423	8,953	62.07
Burgenland	7	94	9	573	12	4,568	5,263	5,263	100.00
n.s.	0	0	1	1	0	10	12	2	16.67
Abroad	18	42	99	125	178	846	1,308	462	35.32
Total	6,299	12,026	10,286	34,950	16,950	106,681	187,192	80,043	42.76

Approximately 10% of all students live in student hostels.

Type of student residence in 1998, 2002 and 2006

	1998	2002	2006
With parents	26.5%	22.3%	25.5%
Single household	24.2%	23.9%	19.4%
With a partner	22.8%	27.9%	25.4%
Flat-sharing community	15.5%	15.8%	19.8%
Halls of residence	11.0%	10.2%	9.9%
Sum	100%	100%	100%

(i) Universities

There are no limits in terms of quantity. However, each transfer requires recognition of prior studies by the receiving institution.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

There are in principle no limits to the transfer of students between programmes. The successful completion of a University of Applied Sciences master degree programme qualifies to pursue a subject-related doctoral degree programme at a University, which, in case the period of studies of the University of Applied Sciences master degree programme was shorter compared to the subject-related master degree at the respective University, shall be prolonged by the difference.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

Students of Private Universities have the same rights as students of Public Universities as far as residence permits and study grants are concerned. There are no limits to the transfer of students.

First-term students in a degree programme and students with a certificate of general education at secondary level

	Austria	EU	3rd Countries	Total
First-term students	24,029	8,676	3,542	36,247
Students	186,275	34,579	19,470	240,324
<i>in %</i>				
First-term students	66.3	23.9	9.8	100.0
Students	77.5	14.4	8.1	100.0

Basically, the degree of openness to students from other Member States is very high, especially if the institutions concerned are working together, or if students concerned contribute to better cooperation. Some problems of recognition can be solved by information tolls, also by the Federal Ministry. In some cases, however, additional requirements have to be demanded out of quality reasons. Recognition of single examinations has, by law, to be done within two months. Decisions on the recognition of diplomas (*Nostrifizierung*) have to be taken within six months from the date at which all necessary documents have been presented. Taking into account the necessity of probable additional examinations, the whole procedure can take one or two years. Professional recognition of EU, EEA and Swiss diplomas are covered by special provisions according to Community Law. The costs of *Nostrifizierung* amount to EUR 150 plus translation costs and legalisation fees.

The degree of openness to teachers and researchers who have obtained their qualifications in other Member States is high, especially if the teacher's or researcher's expertise lies in the interest of the university. No formal recognition procedure is necessary.

The legal framework for employment of academic staff doesn't discriminate against qualifications obtained in other Member States of the European Communities. Universities are free to hire anybody they deem fit to fulfil the demands of their job descriptions.

There are several possibilities of exchange with institutions in other regions and Member States (institutional agreements, joint study programmes, etc.).

Within the framework of the existing EU and international educational programmes (e.g. LLP ERASMUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS, etc.) this kind of exchange takes place in- and outside Europe, also in terms of the Bologna Process (e.g. ECTS acceptance). Austrian HEIs participate actively in these programmes.

3. Evaluation

3.1. Institutional evaluation

Public and Private Universities and *Fachhochschulen* are free to choose independent quality assurance agencies for conducting evaluations of teaching and research. International experts are part of review-teams conducting evaluations.

University Colleges of Teacher Education are regularly evaluated by internal as well by external means. An internal regular evaluation takes place in the form of an annual indicator-based monitoring of the general development, annual evaluation of the study content done by students and an evaluation of single organisational units within the University Colleges of Teacher Education (once within four to five years). External evaluation by external experts is done once within four to five years and if required the Federal Minister for Education, Arts and Culture can commission an ad-hoc external evaluation.

Stakeholders are involved in various forms in internal and external quality assurance procedures within Austrian HEIs. However, their level of participation lies within the institutional autonomy of the HEIs. Especially student participation in quality assurance procedures has been extended over the last years (e.g. students' course evaluation, students as members of external review teams, participation in internal quality assurance instruments).

The ways of publication of quality assessments differ in the HE sub-sectors due to different legal frameworks: The Universities Act 2002 introduced new steering instruments for Public Universities to gather data and information (performance agreements, performance reports and intellectual capital reports). Quality assurance activities are covered in those reports which are made publicly available. Until now it lies within the institutional autonomy of the universities to publish the results of quality assessments.

Fachhochschulen have to submit their evaluation reports to the *Fachhochschulen*-Council. There is no obligation to publish the results of quality assessments, a quality strategy or performance reports. But a summary of the external evaluation reports is published.

Private Universities have to report to the Accreditation Council. Institutions are required to present an annual progress report in line with statutory requirements. In addition to development data, this report must also include results of evaluation procedures (and follow-up procedures) that are to be carried out by the institution on its own initiative at least every two years. These reports are not being published.

The procedures regarding external quality assurance in the different sub-sectors of Austrian HE follow a similar approach. All HEIs are obliged to establish an internal quality management system. Continuous internal evaluations, students' course evaluation, the

evaluation of the performance of teaching staff, external evaluations and follow-up procedures etc. are compulsory elements of those systems.

In the FH-sector in the course of a follow-up process, the evaluated institutions and study programmes have to submit annual reports to the *Fachhochschule* Council outlining the measures that have been taken to bring about improvement. The review teams are also informed on these measures.

4. Funding rules

4.1. Public funding

The allocation of public financial resources for universities is based on performance agreements between the universities and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research. This agreement is updated every 3 years and includes overall strategies, the definition of performance goals and of specific projects.

University Colleges of Teacher Education are fully funded by the state. These institutions are also authorised to receive third-party funds.

80% of the available budget for each university is distributed according to the performance agreement. The remaining 20% are distributed according to the so called „formula budget“. This formula takes account of social, educational and research factors.

(i) Universities

Universities are funded via the Science Fund „*Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung*“ (FWF). This is Austria's central institution for funding basic research. The FWF budget for the period 2009 to 2013 will amount to EUR 800 million (EUR 160 million per year). This is twice as high as in previous years.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

The key figure for financing Universities of Applied Sciences degree programmes is the cost per student place. Part of a background report drawn up for the OECD was used to compute these costs. To create incentives for mixed financing systems, the government funds only about 90 per cent of the annual standard costs for a student place.

Until 2009 the government funds for a student place are EUR 6,904/year (degree programmes with an technical-allotment of more than 50%), EUR 6,105/year (degree programmes with an

technical-allotment of more than 25%) EUR 5,887/year (tourism degree programmes) and EUR 5,814/year for all others programmes.

Actually the government funds for a student place are EUR 7.940/year (degree programmes with an technical-allotment of more than 50%), EUR 6,990/year (degree programmes with an technical-allotment of more than 25%) EUR 6,580/year (tourism degree programmes) and EUR 6,510/year for all others programmes.

The amount of study-places is allocated to the providers by the government. The only performance criterion is the number of students, which are fixed in the official notification accredit.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

For Private Universities there is a prohibition of Federal Funding.

4.2. Impact of quality assessments on funding

(i) Universities

Until now results of quality assessments have no impact on funding decisions for universities.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

The result of quality assessments has an impact for the accreditation and prolongation of accreditation of the degree programme. If the result of quality assessments does not fulfil conditions, the funding by the federal government would be disposed.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

The results of quality assessment have no impact on funding decisions.

4.3. Private funding

4.3.1. Tuition fees and/or households

Students had to pay fees in Austria. They were (re)introduced in 2001 and amounted to EUR 363 per semester (students from non-EU-countries had to pay the double amount). In 2009 the regulations about these fees got amended. Austrian and other EU-students do not pay any fees as long as they study within the minimum studying period according to the respective curriculum plus two semesters. After that time students are forced to pay EUR 363 per semester. That means when students are enrolled in a 3 year bachelor programme, they are

exempt from paying fees for four years. But also if this time horizon is exceeded there are additional exemptions from paying tuition fees (e.g. illness, pregnancy, etc.). The fees are also waived for students who study under mobility programs and for students from the least developed countries and they can be refunded to students from developing countries.

4.3.2. Business, other

Universities gain approximately 25% of their incomes from competitive public and private sources. A bulk of these funds is being used for financing research projects.

(i) Universities (as well as University Colleges of Teacher Education)

Other sources of university funding:

- Fees for events for the purpose of further education
- Foundations (earmarked private funds)

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

The providers are authorized to charge students tuition fees amounting to EUR 363.36 per semester (but there is no obligation to charge students tuition fees). The allotment of tuition fees are 6-9% of the budget, there are no changes being planned. In the sector of Universities of Applied Sciences is no direct funding from industry (the allotment of research is too small), but the allotment of funding of other local authorities accounts between 11% and 52%).

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

Student fees are the most important allotment of funding Private Universities. The importance of earned income and direct funding from industry is marginal.

4.3.3. Grants/loans

The arrangements to support students in Austria comprise direct and indirect support measures, which are mainly financed by public funds. Indirect support measures are independent from social neediness. These measures make up for the biggest part of public support measures. Following measures are seen as indirect support measures: family allowance, coinsurance (children-parents) within the statutory health insurance or favoured self-insurance, statutory accident insurance as well as the existing tax privileges for children.

Direct support measures depend on the one hand on the social neediness of the student. The respective indicator is the total available income (own income, income of the parents) and the

family status and family size. On the other hand also the learning success of the student is relevant. Direct measures are: study allowance (equalisation of tuition fees), travel cost allowance, assistance for studying abroad, study-finishing scholarship, child care allowance und study allowances in extreme situations. Entitled are Austrian citizens and under special circumstances also EU and EEA citizens, citizens from third countries, stateless persons and refugees.

Further to the basic study allowances there also exist some special forms. Special scholarships are granted when students have no financial backing by the parents (“*Selbsterhalterstipendium*”), for students with an exceptional study success (“*Leistungsstipendium*”) or for students who need to finish scientific work (“*Förderungsstipendien*”).

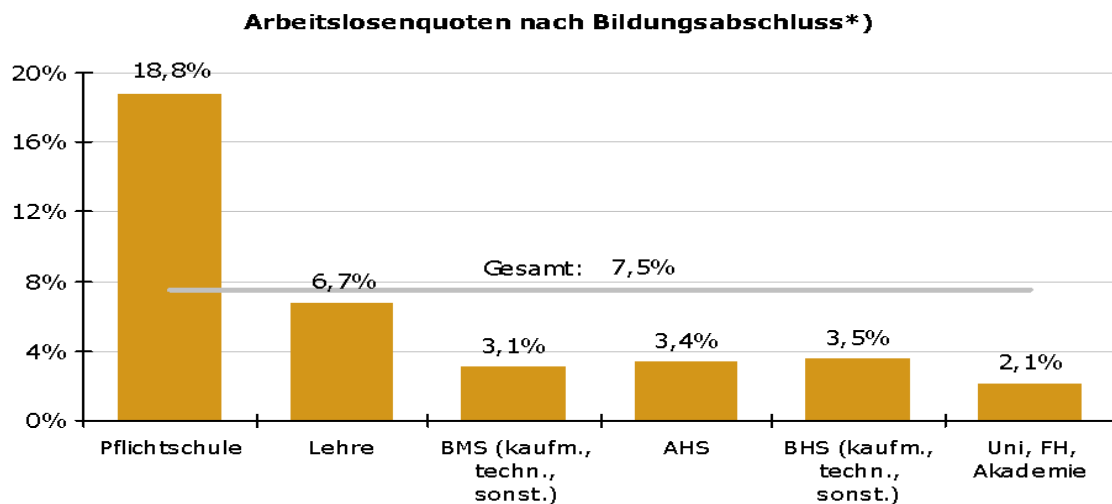
In 2007 study allowances were raised by 12% (inflation adjustment since 2000). In 2008 a report was released which gave detailed information on the social status of students in Austria. These results lead to an extension of entitled persons through the increase of income limits as well as to some other adjustments and improvements (e.g. for disabled students, students with children, for studies abroad). The “*Studienbeihilfenbehörde*” is the responsible authority in Austria which deals with administrative matters connected to all kinds of study allowances.

5. Impact on Employability

The following graph shows unemployment rates for certain kinds of educational attainment.

Translation German – English:

Pflichtschule ...	compulsory school
Lehre ...	vocational training
BMS ...	job oriented middle school
AHS ...	general high school
BHS ...	job oriented high school
Uni, FH, Akad. Education, etc.	Universities, <i>Fachhochschulen</i> , University Colleges of Teacher (tertiary education)



Quellen: AMS, HV

*) Vorgemerkte Arbeitslose einer Bildungsebene bezogen auf das Arbeitskräftepotential (= Arbeitslose + unselbständig Beschäftigte des aktuellen Monats) der selben Bildungsebene; die Gliederung der Beschäftigtenbasis nach Bildungsabschluss wurde nach Ergebnissen der Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2007 (unselb. Erwerbstätige nach LFK) errechnet.

(i) Universities

In accordance with the University Act 2002, each university has a university council as one of three managing collective organs. Besides the members from the university, the council has three members holding responsible positions in the societal, scientific, cultural or economic sectors, who cannot be politicians in office nor employees of the Federal Ministry of Science nor members of the university. The university council performs planning, control and supervisory functions, also acting as an intermediary between government, society and university on matters dealing with the future orientation of the university, especially as regards the substantive orientation of the planned programme priorities. 40 to 60% of the members of a University Council are from the Business sector.

Most studies do not require compulsory internships. Though, for some studies training on the job is compulsory (e.g. for *Fachhochschul*-studies or for studies at pedagogic colleges). Especially technical universities often ask their students to write final thesis in cooperation with companies.

(ii) Private government-dependent (Universities of Applied Sciences, *Fachhochschulen*, FH)

One of the objectives and guiding principles of the University of Applied Sciences degree programmes is to ensure a practice-oriented education on a university level. In the guidelines of the *Fachhochschule* Council for the accreditation of bachelor-, master and diploma degree programmes a demand and acceptance analysis is required. These analyses should look into the employment of the graduates, the relevance of the FH-studies to their current job and the

phase when the graduates enter working life; it should also contain a summarising assessment of the course contents by the graduates with regard to their current job situation.

(iii) Private independent institutions (Private Universities, PU)

In the guidelines of experts (academic programmes, edited by the Austrian Accreditation Council) is stipulated, that the academic programme has to correspond to the institution's mission statement and principles of employment.

Most Austrian universities already have their own career-centres. These centres are the interacting institution between the university and the labour market. These centres offer services like job application trainings, provide information on vacancies, organise career exhibitions, etc. There are also alumni-clubs which support the networking of graduates and the business.

Entrepreneurship Chairs were set up at four Austrian universities and Career Centers offer counselling. Several (esp. technical) universities offer optional entrepreneurship courses as well as interdisciplinary courses. Within the Academia plus Business Programme, run by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency, business incubators have been set up to support potential high tech founders from universities and Universities of Applied Sciences (a+b Centers).

What concerns University Colleges of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) the influential University Council (*Hochschulrat*) also acts as a kind of connector between the University Colleges and the labour market as the members of the *Hochschulrat* traditionally hold responsible positions in the society (esp. in pedagogic) and in science. They contribute via their knowledge and experience to the fulfilment of the goals and tasks of University Colleges of Teacher Education (among others to the adjustment of curricula to labour market needs).

6. Recent and planned reforms of the tertiary education system

6.1. Planned reforms (or reference to ongoing policy debate)

Changes to the present external quality assurance system for Public and Private Universities and *Fachhochschulen* and the development of a common strategy for these institutions are currently discussed.

In Austria the internal quality assurance, its approaches and arrangements are within the institutional responsibility of the different HEIs. However the evidence of the efficiency, accountability and quality of the internal systems has to be assured through external quality assurance mechanisms and has to be carried out by an independent and competent

organisation. Therefore it is intended to establish a single organisation and to integrate the existing agencies and their expertise.

The prospective new organisation will cover the responsibility for the different sectors (Public Universities, *Fachhochschulen*, Private Universities) and will take into account compliance with national and international requirements and standards (e.g. ESG (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area)).

It is planned that the legal und organisational amendments will be in place in 2010 and to start the implementation from then on.