All higher educational institutions are summarised and colorized in the table below:

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<th>Programme duration (years) -&gt;</th>
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General higher education policy objectives and governance

Academic and scientific knowledge as well as research are vital pillars of Austria’s overall development and their potential needs to be secured in the long term. The challenge in the coming years is to design framework conditions and structural prerequisites with a view to competitiveness and future requirements. This also includes a strengthening of the tertiary sector and of research – the target is to make 2% of the GDP available for tertiary education establishments by 2020 ([Work Programme of the Austrian Federal Government for 2013-2018](https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/screen/programme/154562?lang=en) (11)).
Austria boasts a diversified range of higher education programmes, most of which are offered by the universities. In the past few years, a large number of coordinating measures (see also the 2014 University Report) have been introduced in terms of strategy, including:

**Mapping Process for the Austrian Higher Education System (Hochschulplan)**

This Mapping Process – finalized in December 2011 - was a dialogue-based strategy process of public university co-ordination, including research infrastructure and building, human resources, internationalisation and a new model of public funding of universities based on capacities. The main focuses of the process were:

- enhanced cooperation and coordination
- improved use of available resources
- coordinated specification of profiles and special focuses
- coordinated further development of the range of subjects

The mapping process was operationalised in four partial projects:

- large research infrastructure,
- infrastructure road map,
- new university funding scheme
- and coordination measures.

Those were implemented successfully. The main focuses also became goals in succeeding policy instruments, such as the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities (especially objectives 1-3) (available in English language) and the project “Shaping HEIs for the Future”.

**Austrian Higher Education Conference (Österreichische Hochschulkonferenz, HSK)**

The Austrian Higher Education Conference (“Hochschulkonferenz”) was set up as a standing committee in 2012 in order to improve coordination in tertiary education. It consists of the main stakeholders, who act as an advisory board for the Minister of Education, Science and Research. Chaired by the Federal Minister the core group comprises the following members:

- **Universities Austria** (Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz, uniko)
- **Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences** (Österreichische Fachhochschulkonferenz, FHK)
- **Austrian Conference of Private Universities** (Österreichische Privatuniversitätenkonferenz, ÖPUK)
- **Austrian National Union of Students** (Österreichische Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaft, ÖH)
- **Rectors’ Conference of Austrian University Colleges of Teacher Education** (Rektorinnen- und Rektorenkonferenz der österreichischen Pädagogischen Hochschulen, RÖPH)
- Conference of the university senates
- **Austria Science Board** (Österreichischer Wissenschaftsrat).

The Austrian Higher Education Conference handles topics mostly in working groups; the topics deal with areas that require cross-sectoral coordination, such as improving the social protection of students, permeability in the tertiary sector, strengthening the quality of HE-based teaching,
developing profiles for the HE course contents, promoting non-traditional access pathways to the entire HE sector, and further developing the whole HE sector.

Performance agreements for the period 2019-2021

Performance agreements constitute the central control mechanism for public universities. At the end of April 2018, the universities submitted the draft versions of the performance agreements for the period 2019–2021. By the end of 2018, negotiations on the performance agreements between the universities and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research shall be concluded.


The focuses of the Austrian National Development Plan are:

- to improve the use of resources in research and teaching,
- to further coordinate the development of profiles and the specification of focuses;
- to enhance the visibility of the universities for society (“third mission”) such as academic communication, entrepreneurship or lifelong learning.
- to improve the quality of academic teaching
- to expand knowledge and technology transfer

Other strategically important areas include: digitalisation, studyability, further development of doctoral programmes, career models, tenure track; research focus or profile building.

With the upcoming period of performance agreements a new financing model has been introduced which is a capacity-oriented approach to finance universities and is based on a variety of indicators.

Recent reforms in higher education

- Amendments of the Universities Act 2002
- Reform of teacher training (see also: Amendment of Universities Act 2017)
- Faculty of Medicine of the Johannes Kepler University (JKU) Linz: As per 1 March 2014, a Faculty of Medicine was set up in a new form at JKU Linz. It is the first to carry out bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes in human medicine in collaboration with the Medical University of Graz.
- Expansion of the universities of applied sciences sector
- Reform of university funding

Structure and Role of Higher Education Institutions

Universities

Following on from general and vocational education and training courses, the Austrian universities offer degree programmes in the

- humanities, engineering and artistic studies,
- programmes leading to qualified teaching credentials in upper secondary schools, as well as
- medical, natural science, legal, social, economic, and theological studies.

Currently, three different types of degree programmes exist in Austria, but the diploma studies
will be discontinued.

- **Diploma** [22] studies (Diplomstudien): Usually, these studies take 8 to 12 semesters (240 to 300 ECTS), they consist of two or three study sections, each of which is concluded with a degree examination. Those who successfully complete the programme are awarded a degree, such as:
  - a **master's degree** [23]
  - a diploma, i.e. master's degree in engineering (Diplom-Ingenieur/in)
  - exception: in medical studies, the degree Doctor of General Medicine (Doktor/in der gesamten Heilkunde) or the degree Doctor of Dentistry (Doktor/in der Zahnheilkunde) is awarded.

- **Bachelor's** [24] and **master's** [23] degree programmes: According to the Bologna Declaration, the Austrian universities have already organised most of their study programmes in the form of bachelor's degree programmes (3 to 4 years, 180 to 240 ECTS) and master's degree programmes that build on the bachelor's degree programmes (1 to 2 years, 60 to 120 ECTS).
  - The **bachelor's** [24] degree programmes provide scientific or artistic vocational education and training and a qualification in the corresponding specialist area and lead to the awarding of a bachelor's degree.
  - Depending on the specialist area involved, **master's** [23] degree programmes lead to the awarding of a master's degree (Master … or Diplom-Ingenieur/in).

- **Doctoral** [25] and PhD programmes: Doctoral programmes and PhD programmes (Doctor of Philosophy) build on diploma degree and master's degree programmes at universities [2] or universities of applied sciences [26] and mainly provide further development of a student's ability to carry out independent research.
  - Completion of the study programme (after 3 years) goes along with the awarding of the doctoral degree in the relevant field (Doctor or PhD).

**Universities of Applied Sciences**

**Universities of applied sciences** [27] (Fachhochschulen) provide scientifically-based vocational education and training with strong occupational orientation (e.g. the bachelor's [24] degree programme includes at least one practical training semester). At present, degree programmes at universities of applied sciences are offered in:

- engineering,
- economics,
- health sciences,
- social sciences,
- natural sciences,
- design/arts and
- military/security sciences.

The following types of programmes are offered: **Bachelor's** [24] and **master's** [23] degree programmes: Based on the Bologna Declaration, universities of applied sciences offer programmes in the form of bachelor's degree programmes (3 years, 180 ECTS) and master's degree programmes (1 to 2 years, 60 to 120 ECTS). The bachelor's degree programmes provide a practice-oriented education at university level with a qualification in the corresponding specialist area and lead to the awarding of a bachelor's degree (Bachelor of…). In certain subjects, mainly in the field of social work and healthcare, those who successfully complete the programmes are also authorised to practise in the corresponding profession (e.g. social worker, physiotherapist). Master's degree programmes build on the bachelor's degree programmes and, depending on the field involved, lead to the awarding of a master's degree (Master of... or Diplom-Ingenieur/in). Successful completion of a university of applied sciences master's degree programme aims to qualify graduates to pursue a subject-related
**doctoral** degree programme at a **university**.

**University Colleges of Teacher Education**

**University colleges of teacher education** are legal entities under public law with restricted autonomy.

The following study programmes have to be offered and provided at university colleges of teacher education as part of initial teacher training:

- **bachelor’s** and **master’s** degree programmes to obtain teaching credentials for the primary sector,
- **bachelor’s** and **master’s** degree programmes to obtain teaching credentials for the secondary sector (general education as well as vocational education and training).

**Continuing training programmes** have to be offered for all occupational fields related to pedagogy.

The budget for public university colleges of teacher education is allocated by the **Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research**.

For details please see **Chapter 9 Teachers and Education Staff**.

Since the academic year of 2016 joint teacher training programmes of universities and university colleges of teacher training were offered. The new teacher training scheme (“Pädagoginnen- und Pädagogenbildung NEU”) was followed by an amendment of study law in the **Universities Act and the Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education** in the year 2017.

**Organisation of the Academic Year**

At **universities**, the academic year starts on 1 October and ends on 30 September. It consists of a winter semester and a summer semester. Detailed arrangements are laid down by the university **senate**. Also at **universities of applied sciences**, the academic year starts around 1 October. Again, detailed regulations are laid down by the individual providers.

**Relevant higher education laws**

**Universities Act 2002 (Universitätsgesetz 2002)**

Redefinition of the **relationship between universities and the State**; universities are state institutions, autonomous in terms of their statutes, internal affairs and curricula.

- **Amendment of the Universities Act in 2009**: Implementation of the **Bologna structure** by measures such as:
  - the implementation of the bachelor’s and master’s degree structure in all study programmes (including teacher accreditation programmes and medicine),
  - the promotion of student mobility,
  - the provision of an introductory and orientation phase in the first and second semesters, which started in the winter semester of 2011/12,
  - to set measures that will reduce the number of students dropping out, improve the student-teacher ratio, increase social permeability, and increase the ratio of women in
executive positions,
- the possibility to use selective admission procedures for programmes that go along with the German numerus clausus system (medical disciplines and psychology).

**Amendment of the Universities Act in 2011** [31]:

This amendment entered into force in the winter semester of 2012/13 and contains new regulations that govern the admission periods for diploma and bachelor’s programmes which are not subject to particular admission or entry procedures. The admission periods end on the 5th of September for the winter semester, and on 5th of February for the summer semester. The amendment also provides for a speedier nostrification (recognition) of foreign certificates; Decisions on applications for nostrification must be made and issued within three months of receipt of the respective application.

**2013 Amendment to the Universities Act** [32] on the introduction of capacity-oriented, student-related university funding:

This amendment implemented two reforms of university funding: On the one hand, the original funding concept for universities was modified, which stipulated that a university budget consisted of a basic budget and a formula-based budget. By replacing the formula-based budget, the higher education area structural funds were introduced, thus ensuring the competitive distribution of funds based on a few, easily understandable indicators. In the performance agreement period 2013-2015, 60% of the higher education area structural funds were assessed based on the student-related indicator “number of regular students admitted to bachelor’s, diploma and master’s degree courses with weighting based on subject groups”, in this way the future funding in the field of teaching was partly introduced. On the other hand, the Universities Act now states that access regulations according to § 14h of the Universities Act are included in fields of study which are in great demand (Federal Law Gazette BGBl. I No. 52/2013 [32]). The objective of the access regulation according to § 14h was to counteract the unsatisfactory study conditions in the programmes that are within these fields of study. At the same time, another objective –which was the improvement of student-teacher ratios – was achieved by raising the number of staff active in these programmes as part of the performance agreements. § 14h of the Universities Act legally stipulated the number of study places nationwide for study beginners in first degree studies (bachelor’s and diploma studies) in the ISCED study fields of architecture and town planning, biology and biochemistry, computer science, management and administration, business and administration, business, economics and statistics and pharmacy. In these programmes, the university has been authorised to arrange a multi-stage admission or selection procedure.
• **2014 Amendment to the Universities Act** [33]:

The amendment of the 2002 Universities Act in 2014 came into force at the beginning of the year 2015. It included, among other measures, the adjustment from the 40% to the 50% women's quota of the *Equal Treatment Act* ([34](Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, B-GlBG)), an improved mechanism to penalise plagiarism and other academic misconduct, the establishment of compatibility of study programmes or professions for all university members with care responsibilities for children and other dependent persons, clarifications regarding the introductory and orientation period, and the assignation to the scientific staff of doctors who are undergoing training to become medical specialists.

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• **2015 Amendment to the Universities Act** [35]:

This amendment has led to changes in terms of organisational regulations, such as the further development of regulatory contents in the development plan as a strategic planning document for developing the individual university and as the basis for a performance agreement. In addition, existing access regulations (see also the 2013 Amendment to the Universities Act) and the introductory and orientation period (which is now regulated more clearly, among other things concerning the minimum and maximum number of ECTS credits awarded for it) have been prolonged until 2021 based on evaluations and recommendations of the *Austrian Court of Audit* [36]. In the field of personnel legislation, the career paths for associate and associated professors based on international standards have been developed further to ensure that a tenure track system is implemented gradually. Existing regulations on the limited duration of contracts of employees who change to a new employment group (especially third party-funded personnel) have been defined more clearly.

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• **2017 Amendment to the Universities Act** [15]:

- With an amendement to the university act in the year 2013, a core project of the previous years, the new techer training scheme “Pädagoginnen- und Pädagogenbildung NEU” was embedded in the law. One of the main points of this amendment concerns the cooperation between university colleges of teacher education and universities. Teacher training programmes (secondary school) could from this point on only be offered in cooperation between university colleges of teacher education and universities.
- With the amendment to the university act in 2017 a common study law for universities and university colleges of teacher education was implemented. The different study law regulations of the two types of post-secondary education institutions were adapted accordingly to further facilitate and improve cooperation.
- The aim was to provide consistency for students and institutions offering teacher education, as well as clear regulations for study programmes offered in cooperation, consistent legal conditions as well as clarity in the decisions of responsible study law
institutions.
- For this reason, regulation content of the university act and the higher education act were adapted and a consistent terminology was developed. This resulted in a necessary adaptation of organisational structures of university colleges of teacher education.

- see also chapter 14 [37].

The new model for university financing

The new university financing model is based on a long preparation process, that started in 2010 by defining a finance model through a task force consisting of representatives of the ministries of science and finance and the universities. The final report of the task force led to an amendment of the Universities Act 2002 in 2013. This amendment never became effective due to political reasons. The next attempt to implement the new financing model started in 2017. In the summer of 2017 parliament decided, that the universities will receive an additional budget of € 1.3 billion for the performance agreement period 2019-2021. This act of the parliament ensured the implementation of the new financing model. Another amendment of the Universities Act 2002 was prepared on the basis of the former amendment in 2013.

This amendment was submitted to parliament in January 2018. The new regulations were proclaimed by the Federal Law Gazette BGBI. I Nr. 8/2018 [38] and came into force on the 1st of February 2018. According to this the new funding model for public universities shall be implemented in the performance agreement period 2019-2021.

The new model for university financing is based on the implementation of a capacity-oriented, student-based funding of universities. The respective amendment of the Universities Act 2002 contains the necessary regulations for implementing this funding model for all universities as well as regulations to allow access regulations in additional fields of study.

The universities will continue to receive a global budget for the three-year period of the performance agreement. “Global budget” means that the universities are free to allocate their resources within the performance agreement.

The central objectives of the new model for university financing are:
- Improving the quality of research/advancement and appreciation of the arts and teaching, in particular through the improvement of teacher-student ratios.
- Increasing transparency through separate funding of teaching and research/advancement and appreciation of the arts, supplemented by strategic incentives.
- Increasing the number of active students.

The new model of university financing is called the three-pillar-model, because the global budget of each university will be composed of three partial “pillars”:
- The amount for “teaching”,
- The amount for “research/advancement and appreciation of the arts” and
- The amount for “infrastructure and strategic development” areas

The calculation of the partial amounts for the first two areas is based on specific indicators and seven weighted groups of subjects: the number of students who actively take examinations corresponding to a certain number of ECTS-credits in the area “teaching”, and the number of
scientific or artistic staff ("basic performance research/ advancement and appreciation of the arts") in
the area of "research/advancement and appreciation of the arts". There are also competitive
indicators as an additional incentive (e.g. number of graduates, studying fast, third-party funds and
structured doctoral programmes).

This is made possible by a significant increase in the budget for the universities: + € 1.3 billion for the

In 2018 further amendments of the University Act 2002 have taken place thus far:

- amendment to ensure that the Universities Act was reformed according to the General Data
  Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and
- implementation of the dental clinical internship
- amendment concerning members of non EU-countries which regulates the admission to
  preparatory courses in German in order to achieve admission to bachelor- and diploma-
  programmes.

Federal Act on the University for Continuing Education Danube University
Krems (Bundesgesetz über die Universität für Weiterbildung Krems)

This act [39] entered into force on the 1st of April 2004. Based on relevant provisions, the Danube
University Krems [40] adapted its structures to the Universities Act 2002, focusing on post-graduate
education.

Private University Act (Privatuniversitätengesetz, PUG)

Based on this act [41], which entered into force in 2012, private institutions can obtain accreditation
as a private university by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria [42];
study programmes can be offered either in accordance with state programmes and degrees or
without reference to them.

University of Applied Sciences Studies Act (Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz, FHStG)

Based on this act [43] which was adopted in 1993, public and private institutions can obtain
accreditation as a university of applied sciences [27] ("Fachhochschule", FH) by the Agency
for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria [42].

Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education
(Organisation der Pädagogischen Hochschulen und ihre Studien (HG 2005)

Based on this act [44] the establishment of public and private university colleges of teacher
education [45] ("Pädagogische Hochschulen", PHs) takes place.

Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Hochschul-
Qualitätssicherungsgesetz, HS-QSG 2011)

Provision of the following elements (by this act) [46]:

- a cross-sectoral law on external quality assurance; establishment of the Agency for Quality
  Assurance and Accreditation Austria [42], integrating the former agencies (AQA, FH Council,
Accreditation Council) in 2012,

- **framework** for quality assurance procedures across sectors (e.g. obligation to publish outcome of procedures, possibility of certification or accreditation, etc.),
- **audit areas** outlined by law, details defined by the Agency,
- quality assurance **procedures** for audit or accreditation,
- installation of a **student ombudsman office** as an information and service centre for all students at higher education institutions,
- **registration regulations** for programmes provided by foreign higher education establishments in Austria.

According to the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, universities must be evaluated through external audits, whether by an agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) or another internationally recognised and independent quality assurance agency.

**Data available at the data warehouse of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and** [47].

**Legislation References**

**Higher Education - as amended** [48]

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**Source URL:** https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/higher-education-1_en

**Links**

[1] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bibliography-1_en#bibA23
[6] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/institutions-1_en#inst4