Branches of Study

Public Universities

*Bachelor’s* [1] degree programmes at universities [2] are offered in the following groups of studies:

- arts
- economic sciences
- engineering sciences
- humanities
- law
- medicine and health sciences
- natural sciences
- social sciences
- teacher training
- theology
- veterinary medicine

Generally, every degree programme belongs to one of the study groups, which determines the academic degree. Students can also follow an individual study programme (combination of different study programmes) with the approval of the institution.

Universities of Applied Sciences

*There* [3] is no definition of *bachelor’s* [1] degree programmes by statute; programmes are offered in the following fields:

- engineering
- economics
- health sciences
- social sciences
- natural sciences
- design/arts
- military/security
Private Universities

Also here [4] there exists no definition of bachelor’s [1] degree programmes by statute; programmes are offered in fields such as:

- design/arts and music
- medicine and public health
- psychotherapy
- economics
- catholic theology
- law

University Colleges of Teacher Education

As part of initial teacher training University Colleges of Teacher Education [5] offer bachelor’s [1] and master’s [6] degree programmes to obtain teaching credentials for the primary sector as well as bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes to obtain teaching credentials for the secondary sector (general education as well as vocational education and training). For details please see here [7].

Admission Requirements

General admission requirements for bachelor’s [1] degree programmes:

- general university entrance qualification
- specific university entrance qualification for the chosen study programme at public universities
- proof of specific skills for artistic programmes
- proof of physical/motor skills for teacher training programmes in physical education and for degree programmes in sports sciences
- admission procedure for degree programmes at universities of applied sciences
- proof of specific skills for teacher training programmes at the university colleges of teacher education

Admission to bachelor’s [1] degree programmes is granted by the matriculation [8] certificate acquired at academic secondary schools [9], the matriculation certificate and diploma [10] acquired at colleges for higher vocational education [11], or upon successful completion of a limited higher education entrance qualification [12]. Graduates of lower secondary schools who have acquired an apprenticeship-leave diploma [13] may take an examination for external students [14] which provides the general higher education entrance qualification [15].

Admission to university of applied sciences [3] bachelor’s [1] degree programmes is also possible with previous vocational experience and qualification of applicants. In some fields of study there is a selective admission process, this is the case for

- degree programmes at universities of applied sciences [3]
- study programmes at the university colleges of teacher education [5]
- bachelor’s degree programmes at universities [2], such as human medicine, dental medicine, veterinary medicine, and psychology; since the winter semester of 2013 it has also been possible to lay down access restrictions for fields of study which are in great demand such as architecture, biology, computer science, pharmacy and business; the respective university is responsible for deciding whether the access restriction is applied (based on § 14h of the Universities Act [16]). An amendment [17] to the Universities Act in late 2015 specifies new access regulations. The fields of study to which access regulations apply have remained largely
Admission to University colleges of teacher education [5] bachelor’s [1] degree programmes see here [7].

**Introductory and orientation period (STEOP)**

Implemented in 2011/12, the STEOP allows universities to include an introductory and orientation period in study programmes. It depends on the university and department how the STEOP is organised. The main features are:

- Students are obliged to obtain a certain number of ECTS points in one semester: since the 2015 Amendment to the Universities Act, a minimum number of 8 ECTS up to a maximum of 20 ECTS applies to all curricula.
- Students must successfully complete the introductory and orientation period in order to continue their study programme. If the curriculum allows it, the university is entitled to raise this figure to 22 ECTS points.
- In the winter semester 2012/13 new admission periods were introduced: the rector’s office at each university determines the admission period for each semester. For winter semesters, these periods must last for at least 8 weeks for bachelor’s (and diploma) programmes and must end on 5 September; for summer semesters they must last for at least four weeks and end on 5 February.

Finally, the general university entrance qualification [15] can also be obtained by completing studies at a post-secondary educational institution, for which the required work output amounts to a minimum of 180 ECTS credits (this corresponds to a minimum duration of three years of studies).

If an applicant has a foreign HE entrance qualification, it has to be equivalent to an Austrian HE entrance qualification and therefore reviewed. If a specific university qualification is needed, proof must be furnished that study-specific admission requirements are met, including the right to immediate admission to a degree programme, as exist in the country issuing the document that provides proof of the general university entrance qualification. As far as Austrian secondary school-leaving certificates are concerned, supplementary examinations may have to be taken for specific subjects in degree programmes based on the University Entrance Qualification Ordinance [18] (Universitätsberechtigungsverordnung).

At public universities [2], however, the senate [19] can establish and announce restrictions on the admission of foreign and stateless applicants. In this case, EU and EEA citizens and certain other groups of persons (e.g. refugees or applicants funded by mobility programmes) are exempt from such regulations.

**Guidance on the choice of study courses**

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research [20] (BMBWF) is responsible for a large part of the guidance activities for the tertiary education sector. Here it cooperates closely with the Austrian National Union of Students [21] (ÖH). Public Employment Service [22] (AMS) also publishes information material and offers guidance on a regular basis for individuals and school classes at the Career Guidance Centres [23] (BIZ). The individual universities also carry out a large number of measures for prospective students. These measures include:

- specific information events,
- information days or information weeks where pupils have the opportunity to be counselled on
study options and HE programme contents.

Measures:

1. Universities are increasingly offering **self-assessment tests** as instruments for reasoned study career decisions. Such tests are compulsory in some study programmes which can only be attended after an admission procedure.

2. Based on its legal mandate, **ÖH** [21] offers comprehensive guidance and advisory services on studies for prospective students and on enrolment for study beginners. In addition, beginners’ tutorials are offered at the universities jointly with **ÖH** [21].

3. Based on plans laid down in the current government programme, the **BMBWF** programme “**Study Checker**” (“Studienchecker”) has been extended. Since 2014/15 this programme has been called “**18plus. Career and Study Checker**” (“18plus. Berufs- und Studienchecker”) and aims to enhance preparation for the study and career choice.

These initiatives aim to help people make an informed study choice and therefore also contribute to a better distribution of student flows.

**Curriculum**

Each degree programme must have a curriculum that governs the qualification profile and programme structure, as well as the subjects and courses required for examinations or other study results (always defining the scope of the achievement in ECTS credits) and the way in which examinations must be taken.

**Public Universities**

It is one of the duties of the **senate** [19] to specify the academic degrees and titles awarded to graduates of certificate university programmes for further education (Universitätslehrgänge).

The scope of a degree programme is defined in terms of the credits established under the European Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

**Universities of Applied Sciences**

A board of experts prepares the curricula which then have to be accredited by the **Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria** [24]. The workload of students is defined in terms of ECTS credits. **Bachelor’s** [1] degree programmes at universities of applied sciences [3] have 180 ECTS. For accreditation the programmes have to contain the following items:

- orientation profiles
- a survey of demand and acceptance
- information on the group of persons entrusted with the development of the curriculum (development teams)
- evaluations of programmes
- occupational fields and profile of professional qualifications
- curriculum and examination regulations
- teaching concept
- entrance requirements
- admission regulations
- information on teaching and research staff
- fields of practice-related research and development
Private Universities

The curricula are prepared independently by the university. In the accreditation process conducted by AQ Austria, the curricula are examined by international experts to fulfil aims such as quality, international comparability and conformity with the Bologna objectives.

Most bachelor's degree programmes that are offered at private universities have 180 ECTS credits; however, exceptions are possible (e.g. in the field of music and arts).

University colleges of teacher education see here

Teaching Methods

The teaching staff may freely choose the contents and methods of their courses. Basically, the types of courses have not changed in the past few decades. There are

- lectures,
- seminars,
- introductory seminars,
- exercises,
- practical workshops,
- field trips,
- tutorials, etc.
- (increasingly offered in English).

Long-distance study units are explicitly permitted. In arts and music programmes, one-to-one courses are common, not least to support artistic training.

Use of new media

The applied forms of technology-supported teaching vary widely and range from

- online self-assessments,
- the streaming of courses, and
- the preparation of digitised material, on to
- multiple-choice feedback and
- multiple-choice exam questions,
- discussion forums and the
- targeted use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

E-learning Site: overview of the field of technology-enhanced teaching and learning, the centres of technology-enhanced teaching and an overview of initial and continuing education and training regarding teaching competences at Austrian universities.

To make courses flexible in terms of space and time for employed students, handicapped students, and students with care obligations, some are offered online and in other cases e-learning elements are integrated into studies. This has been implemented by Linz University, for example, in the field of social sciences, business and economics and in the field of law (multimedia diploma
One specific development in the field of online courses is **massive open online courses or MOOCs**. In general, MOOCs are not yet widespread at Austrian universities, but the Graz University of Technology [26] and Graz University [27] have worked together to develop the first Austrian platform for MOOCs under the name iMooX. This platform aims to provide free-of-charge courses with multimedia contents for the broadest possible sector of the population.

For University colleges of teacher education [5] see here [7].

### Progression of Students

#### Public Universities

There is no time limit for students at public universities [2] to finish their degree programmes as long as they are registered for the continuation of their studies.

**Repetitions of examinations:**

Students are entitled to **resit any failed examinations three times**. All examinations taken in the same subject (in the relevant study programmes at the same university) count towards the permissible number of resits. The statute of each university may state whether further resits are permitted and, if so, how many may be taken. The third repetition of an examination must be supervised by an examination board if the examination takes the form of a single procedure.

The examination regulations for the individual curricula must be laid down by the responsible body. This includes, in particular, regulations concerning the method and purpose of examinations and the way in which they are organised. Before candidates can take the bachelor’s examination [28], they need to write bachelor’s theses.

**Grades of examinations and scientific/artistic theses:**

- very good (sehr gut)
- good (gut)
- satisfactory (befriedigend)
- passed (genügend)
- failed (nicht genügend)

Intermediate assessments are not admissible. Whenever this type of grading as specified above cannot be made or is inappropriate, the positive grade must be “attended successfully” (mit Erfolg teilgenommen) and the negative grade must read “attended without success” (ohne Erfolg teilgenommen). Examinations that consist of several subjects or parts may only be given a positive grade if every subject or part has been marked with a positive grade.

Examinations that have been taken in the course of other studies or at another recognised Austrian or foreign post-secondary educational institution, a training college for educational professions, another recognised Austrian educational institution, where admission requires the general university entrance qualification, or which were taken at the end of a university-level course, must be recognised by means of an official decision to the extent that they are equivalent to the examinations required by the curriculum. The examinations taken for a subject in a programme at an Austrian university or at a university in the European Union or the European Economic Area must be recognised as equivalent to examinations for the same subject in the respective programme of another Austrian university in any case if the ECTS credits are different or even the same.
In addition, there are several multilateral and bilateral agreements on the recognition of examinations.

Universities of Applied Sciences

At universities of applied sciences, bachelor’s degree programmes are scheduled as courses that have to be attended by students in a certain order. A specific number of tolerance semesters (or a maximum tolerated duration of studies) has been laid down. Regarding the repetition of examinations, students are entitled to resit failed examinations twice; a year of study may be repeated once. Many universities of applied sciences provide full-time (in the daytime) as well as extra-occupational study programmes, the latter especially for working students.

Private Universities

As the programmes offered at private universities follow international standards (with an on-site expert review during the accreditation procedure), (nearly) all study programmes have a modular structure and use the ECTS credit system. The definition of the duration of study and the tolerance semesters, etc. lies within the sphere of responsibility of the university.

University colleges of teacher education see here

Employability

To support students for their entry into professional careers, the universities’ representatives keep contact with the social partners and respective companies. In fact, the social partners, i.e. the employees’ representatives (chambers of labour, trade unions) and employers’ representatives (the Austrian Economic Chamber, the Association of Austrian Industries) as well as experts from higher education institutions (universities, universities of applied sciences, research institutions) participate in the decision-making and are involved in developments, which aim to ease access of graduates to the labour market. Representatives of professional fields are also involved in the development of curricula. The universities’ steering bodies (the university councils) comprise representatives from industry and public life.

At universities of applied sciences, representatives of professional fields are involved in the process of study programme accreditation. At the governance level the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development (Rat für Forschungs- und Technologieentwicklung) and the Austrian Science Board (Österreichischer Wissenschaftsrat) make suggestions on how to improve the higher education system, with recommendations to enhance support for entry to the labour market in science and industry.

For University colleges of teacher education see here.

Interface between study and the world of work

In line with the performance agreements, the universities are responsible for imparting to students not only specialist competences but also those which enable them to apply academic knowledge and skills outside the academic system. Therefore, graduates have to be prepared appropriately for the labour market and it is necessary to check if the imparted competences meet the requirements of the labour market. In this connection, the universities have set up a system for exchanging their views on contents with their graduates as well as with employers, professional representatives and representatives of associations, particularly to improve the relevance of bachelor’s degrees for the world of work. These processes have been stimulated and institutionalised on a broad basis due to the
inclusion of qualification profiles in curricula. Some universities take additional measures in the field of employability which aim to ease the students’ later access to the labour market, for example with extension curricula or supplementary curricula, which enable students to acquire supplementary competences and qualifications, or with internships. Many universities use graduate surveys with the goal of obtaining information on the employment situation, competences and labour market experiences of their graduates. The results of these surveys provide a contribution to quality management and, in turn, are incorporated into teaching and curricula to enhance their relevance for the world of work. In addition, all universities provide a wide range of services to support their graduates in their entry to the world of work. This is mainly done as part of their alumni/alumnae networks, in their career guidance institutions or via outsourced organisations. These include the following:

- career fairs
- job portals
- career centres
- information events
- continuing education and training courses which support the acquisition of specialist additional qualifications and promote the strengthening of personal skills.

**Measures to improve knowledge and technology transfer**

Measures such as patenting, developing transfer capacities, skills and intellectual property strategies form part of the performance agreements with the universities.

The **regional knowledge transfer centres** shall promote technology transfer between universities and industry and systematically exploit knowledge as a basic innovation resource and key factor for success. Closer cooperation between the universities within the framework of the knowledge transfer centres should help to recognise exploitation opportunities more effectively.

The new funding program “**Spin-off Fellowships**” supports scientists and students with innovative ideas in their efforts to establish their own companies.

- **Industry-science collaboration**

  Austria has initiated some long-term research funding programmes (e.g. COMET, CDG, Josef Ressel Centers, FHplus) to support industry-science collaboration in order to promote knowledge and technology transfer. Public universities and universities of applied sciences are important players in these programmes.

- **Internships**

  The participation of higher education establishments in the ERASMUS+ programme enables the funding of joint international projects and internships completed at companies, leading to added value for students, higher education establishments and for the economy. Attracting female students is a strategic objective particularly for universities of technology; therefore, some universities enable and support subject-related internships particularly for young women.
  
  At universities of applied sciences, internships are mandatory in all bachelor’s degree programmes. These mandatory internships are a relevant part of the study course and give students an opportunity to have contact with prospective employers, in addition to gaining
practical experience. When designing the curricula, private universities explicitly have to consider aspects of employability. This means that qualification objectives need to be defined for the entire programme as well as for individual modules and courses. After all, internships are often seen as a prerequisite for a future employment relationship, especially at the transition from HE studies to the labour market (“graduates’ internships”). A study conducted in 2011 (FORBA-Forschungsbericht [FORBA Research Report] (2011): “Praktika und Praktikanten/Praktikantinnen in Österreich. Empirische Analyse von Praktika sowie der Situation von Praktikanten/Praktikantinnen” [“Internships and Interns in Austria. An Empirical Analysis of Internships and the Situation of Interns”], study commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumers Protection reveals that the share of graduates who have completed at least one internship after obtaining their degree was 15% for Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences.

- Entrepreneurship

Several universities have specific departments for entrepreneurship whereas other universities offer individual courses. These courses cover topics such as business planning, intellectual property rights and idea generation and are usually set up as project or field work. Furthermore it is an objective of future performance agreements to develop the topic of entrepreneurship and its importance for the universities’ activities, to integrate it more strongly into teaching, and to raise the entrepreneurship competence at universities. This aims to contribute towards implementing the knowledge triangle of education-research-innovation with lasting effect. Another goal is to further develop the entrepreneurship culture at universities. Austria is taking part at the Higher Education Innovation Country Review organised in Cooperation of European Commission and OECD.

Student Assessment

Public Universities

Whether individual courses have been attended successfully is evaluated by the respective course teacher. Students complete the bachelor’s degree programme at university with bachelor’s examinations. The examination regulations must be published by the responsible collegiate bodies. These regulations include regulations concerning the method and objectives of examinations and the way in which they are organised. Consequently, the responsible body has adequate leeway in designing examinations.

In addition to the bachelor’s examination, a minimum of two bachelor's theses must be written. The results of examinations and scientific/artistic theses are defined by grades:

- very good (sehr gut)
- good (gut)
- satisfactory (befriedigend)
- passed (genügend)
- failed (nicht genügend)
Universities of Applied Sciences

For universities of applied sciences some general examination regulations are prescribed by law. The specific examination regulations are to be defined from the universities of applied sciences and are a subject of the accreditation by AQ Austria. Bachelor's [1] degree programmes at universities of applied sciences include the obligation to write theses in the context of courses (bachelor theses); the final bachelor’s exam is an examination supervised by a committee. The results of examinations and theses are marked using the following grades:

- passed with highest distinction: for an outstanding performance at the examination
- passed with distinction: for a performance at the examination that is considerable above average
- passed for a positive assessment
- failed

Private Universities

There is no central statutory provision that governs examination regulations at private universities; examination regulations are verified by international experts in the framework of accreditation by AQ Austria [24]. Private universities design their examination methods and schedules autonomously.


Certification

Public Universities

After passing the curriculum, the academic degree is awarded by a written official notification, at the latest one month after completion. The official notification indicates: the study programme, the academic degree, and the legal basis.

There are the following bachelor's [1] degrees:

- Bachelor (individually designed degree programme): BA
- Bachelor of Nursing Science (der Pflegewissenschaft): BScN
- Bachelor of Philosophy (der Philosophie): B.phil.
- Bachelor of Law, Business and Economics (der Rechts- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften): LLB. oec.
- Bachelor of Statistics (der Statistik): BStat
- Bachelor of Architecture: BArch
- Bachelor of Arts: BA or B.A.
- Bachelor of Arts and Education: BAEd
- Bachelor of Arts in Economics: B.A.(Econ.)
- Bachelor of Business Law: LL.B.
- Bachelor of Education: BEd
- Bachelor of Education – University: B.Ed.Univ.
- Bachelor of Engineering: B.Eng.
- Bachelor of Laws: LL.B.
- Bachelor of Religious Education – University: B.Rel.Ed.Univ.
- Bachelor of Science: BSc or B.Sc.
- Bachelor of Science in Medical Sciences: BScMed
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing: BScN
 Bachelor of Tax Law: **LL.B.**  
 Bachelor of Theology: **BTh**  
 Bakkalaureus / Bakkalaurea der Künste (Bachelor of arts): **Bakk. art.**  
 Bakkalaureus / Bakkalaurea der Naturwissenschaften (Bachelor of Natural Sciences): **Bakk. rer. nat.**  
 Bakkalaureus / Bakkalaurea der Philosophie (Bachelor of Philosophy): **Bakk. phil.**  
 Bakkalaureus / Bakkalaurea der Rechtswissenschaften (Bachelor of Law): **Bakk. iur.**  
 Bakkalaureus / Bakkalaurea der technischen Wissenschaften (Bachelor of Technical Sciences): **Bakk. techn.**

If a degree programme is completed within the framework of a joint degree programme, the academic degree can be awarded in one joint document, together with the partner institution.

For the purpose of supporting the graduates’ international mobility, students are entitled to be issued a Diploma Supplement pursuant to Article IX.3 of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, in connection with the official nostrification of the academic degree.

If an Austrian academic degree is urgently needed for a certain professional activity – i.e. the activity falls under an area with statutory regulations and the professional recognition pursuant to EU law does not apply – holders may apply to an institution with subject-matter competence for nostrification of their foreign academic degree. The nostrification procedure is an administrative procedure. In a few exceptional cases (e.g. regarding students from Italy or Croatia), bilateral agreements, instead of nostrification, allow equivalency to be established by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy.

**Universities of Applied Sciences**

After passing the courses and examinations required for a university of applied sciences programme [33], students are awarded a degree. The academic degree for university of applied sciences bachelor’s degree programmes [28] is “Bachelor” with a suffix designating the discipline. Admissible degrees, suffixes and abbreviations of degrees are laid down by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria [24] (AQ) and approved by the Federal Minister [20]. For individual university of applied sciences programmes, the respective degrees together with the additional designations are to be established by AQ Austria in the accreditation decree.

**Bachelor’s degrees:**

- Bachelor of Arts in Arts and Design: **BA or B.A.**
- Bachelor of Arts in Business: **BA or B.A**
- Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Studies: **BA or B.A**
- Bachelor of Arts in Military Leadership: **BA or B.A**
- Bachelor of Arts in Police Leadership: **BA or B.A.**
- Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences: **BA or B.A.**
- Bachelor of Laws: **LLB or LL.B.**
- Bachelor of Science in Engineering: **BSc or B.Sc.**
- Bachelor of Science in Health Studies: **BSc or B.Sc.**
- Bachelor of Science in Natural Sciences: **BSc or B.Sc.**

**Private Universities**

After accreditation by AQ Austria [24], private universities [4] are entitled to award Austrian
academic degrees.

Austrian Bachelor’s [1] and Bakkalaureat degrees

- Bachelor Dental Hygiene: BA
- Bachelor of Arts: BA or B.A.
- Bachelor of Arts in Music: BA-M
- Bachelor of Arts in Music Education: BA-ME
- Bachelor of Business Administration: BBA or B.B.A.
- Bachelor of Engineering: BEng
- Bachelor of Science: BSc or B.Sc.
- Bachelor of Nursing Science (Pflegewissenschaft): BSc
- Bachelor of Science in Business Administration: BSc
- Bachelor of Science in Engineering: B.Sc.
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing: BScN
- Bachelor of Science in Psychology: B.Sc.
- Bakkalaureus / Bakkalaurea der Pflegewissenschaft (Bachelor of Nursing Science): Bakk.
- Bakkalaureus / Bakkalaurea der Psychotherapiewissenschaft (Bachelor of Psychotherapy): Bakk. pth.
- Bakkalaurea/Bakkalaureus der Religionspädagogik (Bachelor of Religious Education): Bacc. rel. paed.

University colleges of teacher education [5] see here [7].

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