Organisational Aspects

Universities

According to the 2002 Universities Act (UG) [1] and the collective agreement (KV) [2] for employees at universities [3], these are obliged to ensure the development and continuing vocational education and training of their employees so that they can fulfil their tasks as well as possible in research and teaching. A specific number of hours is not determined here.

Via company agreements, i.e. written agreements between the employer – the university – and the works council, every university can provide more precise regulations for certain matters stipulated in collective agreements, for example:

- Content and modalities for the conclusion of qualification agreements (cf. subchapter 9.4 [4]) and development agreements for certain personnel positions. These are based on the plans for the promotion of up-and-coming academics and personnel development, for which every university itself is responsible. Qualification and development agreements regularly also contain references to continuing education and training (CET) measures which have to be completed in order to fulfil these agreements.
- Granting an entitlement for all employees, in each case after seven years of uninterrupted employment at the corresponding university, to be given leave for continuing education and training purposes (‘educational leave’) for a maximum period of two months in each case. This agreement must also include the goals of the CET.
- Granting of subsidies for attending events which serve the purpose of teaching, research, development and other in-service training measures and whose attendance is explained by the tasks of the employee.

Personnel development – and therefore also CET – is very important at universities [More] [5]. All universities have personnel development and CET measures tailored to the needs of up-and-coming academics in order to develop their competences in terms of teaching and research. However, with these measures it is also possible to acquire qualifications which not only support a university career but also benefit those who are switching to a career outside the university. Universities generally have their own programme for people starting an academic career (e.g. UNISTART at the University of Graz [6]), a basic course, basic modules, etc.; for junior academic staff many universities offer coaching and mentoring programmes as well as career development programmes which, in some cases, are also aimed at specific target groups such as postdocs for fixed-term positions or women.

Most universities offer didactic training programmes which, in particular, target up-and-coming academics and the development of their didactic qualifications (teaching competence). At some
universities there are designated organisational units or centres for teaching competence (e.g. at the University of Graz [7]). Around half of universities have e-teaching/e-learning centres which provide didactic support. Overall there are many different courses and CET programmes on teaching competence topics, for example on teaching and learning scenarios, teaching and writing in English and intercultural competence, onto media treatment of online materials, writing, presentation and rhetoric skills and basic training programmes in didactics for teachers. In addition, universities have committed themselves to take suitable measures in the performance agreements (performance agreements 2016-2018) to ensure the higher education didactics-related initial and continuing education and training of the university teachers and, with new appointments, to attach importance to corresponding qualifications.

Events aimed at the continuing education and training of up-and-coming academics to improve their soft skills, social skills, teamwork and management development are a fixed component of the personnel development measures at universities. Here there are special offers aimed at the next generation of academic management, i.e. people with qualification agreements which, in particular, are geared towards the areas of didactics training, management and leadership competence and often provide additional support with mentoring, coaching or networking forums. More

Universities of applied sciences

The Universities of Applied Sciences Act [8] does not stipulate any specific regulations on the continuing education and training of teaching and research staff at universities of applied sciences (FHs). It contains only the obligation that the assessment results of courses by students must be used for quality assurance and for the pedagogical/didactic CET of the teachers. Since practice-oriented teaching at higher education level at FHs is of very high significance, the regular professional and didactic CET of the teaching and research staff is important and is also funded and supported accordingly by the FH, however.

FHs regularly have personnel development plans which stipulate obligatory higher education didactics-related CET programmes for the employed staff in particular. In addition, teaching awards, which are given for innovative teaching concepts, and annual didactic days provide important incentives for the professionalisation of teaching.

Since practice-oriented teaching at higher education level at universities of applied sciences is of very high significance, the regular professional and didactic CET of the teaching and research staff is important and is also funded and supported accordingly by the FH. Across universities of applied sciences, the Committee on Personnel and Organisational Development of the Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences [9] also regularly provides CET offers on current topics (e.g. ‘From teaching to learning’) for employees in the FH sector.

University colleges of teacher education

In the Act on the Organisation of University Colleges of Teacher Education [10] there are also no specific regulations regarding the continuing education and training of teaching staff. To assure the quality of the study programmes, however, the higher education committee has to take measures to regularly check courses. The results have to be used for the quality development of the PHs and also for the in-service training of the teaching staff. CET programmes are also offered in the area of PHs in particular on the topics of methodology and didactics.
Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activities

Universities

Most universities [3] increasingly make provisions for their academic staff and university teachers to take part in didactics courses regularly, and also in systematically structured training programmes. University teachers are free to take part in in-service training events in Austria and abroad. Universities often financially support the attendance of national and international meetings, conferences and training courses. At many universities, mobility measures are promoted via mobility programmes and mobility allowances and supported by offices for international relations or international offices. A number of universities also take account of quality assurance and quality management aspects.

Universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education

In universities of applied sciences [8] and university colleges of teacher education [11] there are no particular incentives for the continuing professional development of teachers. Depending on the agreement, the completion of courses is free of charge for the participants, however. In the case of applications for a professorship at university colleges of teacher education and applications in the area of research and teaching at universities of applied sciences, proof of completed CET programmes is an advantage.

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