

## Diploma Supplement

### The System of Austrian Higher Education

(Item 8 of the Diploma Supplement – English)

As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014

#### Post-secondary Education in Austria

- The Austrian post-secondary **university sector** (*Hochschulsektor*) consists of
  - Public universities (*Universitäten*), maintained by the state;
  - Private universities (*Privatuniversitäten*), operated by private organisations with state accreditation;
  - Maintainers of university of applied sciences degree programmes (*Fachhochschul-Studiengänge*) incorporated upon the basis of private or public law and subsidised by the state, with state accreditation (some of which are entitled to use the designation *Fachhochschule*);
  - University colleges of education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) maintained by the state or operated by private organisations with state accreditation;
  - The Institute of Science and Technology Austria;
  - Universities of philosophy and theology (*Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschulen*), operated by the Roman Catholic Church.
- The **non-university post-secondary sector** (*außeruniversitärer postsekundärer Sektor*) consists of
  - Military academies (*Militärische Akademien*);
  - Vienna School of International Studies (*Diplomatische Akademie*);
  - Certain training institutions for psychotherapists (*Psychotherapeutische Ausbildungseinrichtungen*);
  - Conservatories (*Konservatorien*).

The following text addresses exclusively the university sector.

#### Overall Structure of University Education

There are currently two different systems of degree programmes in Austria: a newer system, based on the European Higher Education Area (Bologna process), and a former one, dating from before the European Higher Education Area.

- The **new system** is based on the distinction between undergraduate and graduate studies. Upon completion of an undergraduate programme (*Bachelorstudium* at universities and university colleges of education or, respectively, *Fachhochschul-Bachelorstudiengang* at universities of applied sciences, comprising 180 to 240 ECTS credits), a bachelor's degree (designation: „Bachelor of/in ...“ ) is awarded. Upon completion of a graduate programme (*Masterstudium* at universities and university colleges of education or, respectively, *Fachhochschul-Masterstudiengang* at universities of applied sciences, comprising 60 to 120 ECTS credits), a master's degree (designation: „Master of/in ...“ ) is awarded. In the fields of engineering, the designation of the master's degree can also be „Diplom-Ingenieur/in“.
- Under the auspices of the **older system** of diploma programmes (*Diplomstudien*), the first degree awarded is the diploma degree (*Diplomgrad*). An Austrian higher secondary school leaving certificate or its equivalent is the general qualification necessary for enrolling in a diploma programme; conclusion of a diploma programme entitles degree holders to enrol in doctoral programmes. A diploma degree (*Diplomgrad*) is awarded by Austrian universities after a course of study consisting of 240 to 360 ECTS credits. Full degree titles are gender specific designations: *Magister* for men; *Magistra* for women. Degree titles also include a general description of the field of study in which they were obtained, e.g. *Magister philosophiae*. In the fields of engineering, the degree titles are *Diplom-Ingenieur/in*. Degrees awarded in medicine and dentistry are exceptions to the above. The first degrees awarded after the completion of these degree programmes consisting of 360 ECTS credits are *Doctor medicinae universae* and *Doctor medicinae dentalis*, respectively.

Graduates of university of applied sciences programmes that consist of 240 to 300 ECTS credits are awarded, analogous to university studies, a university of applied science diploma degree (*Fachhochschul-Diplomgrad*) contingent upon discipline: either a *Diplom-Ingenieur/in (FH)* for fields of engineering or *Magister/Magistra (FH)* in other fields of study.

Some study programmes for teachers' qualifications are offered jointly between universities and university colleges of education.

Recipients of these diploma degrees from the old system or master's degree from the new system (including the ones awarded in both cases by the universities of applied sciences) are entitled to enrol in doctoral programmes (*Doktoratsstudium*) at universities. A doctoral degree with the designation either "Doktor/in" or "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD) is awarded upon completion of a doctoral programme with a minimum duration of three years.

In addition to the degree programmes (*ordentliche Studien*) described above, non-consecutive certificate programmes (*außerordentliche Studien*) are offered, for example in the form of university programmes for further education (*Universitätslehrgänge*) or individual units / modules in scientific subjects, both at universities; certificate university of applied sciences programmes for further education (*Lehrgänge zur Weiterbildung*) or individual units / modules in scientific subjects at universities of applied sciences; and certificate university college programmes for further education (*Hochschullehrgänge*) at university colleges of education.

### **Bachelor Programme (*Bachelorstudium*)**

Admission to a bachelor programme is granted upon the basis of the Austrian higher secondary school leaving certificate (*Reifezeugnis*), its foreign equivalent, or the successful completion of a special university entrance qualification examination (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*). Students of compulsory lower schools who have completed additional schooling in the form of apprenticeships as skilled workers may take a vocationally based examination acknowledged as equivalent to the higher secondary school leaving certificate (*Berufsmatura*). Admission to bachelor programmes in the arts is based on aptitude ascertained by admission examinations. Admission to university of applied sciences bachelor programmes is also possible on the basis of previous vocational or technical experience and qualifications of the applicants. In some university bachelor programmes, in most university of applied sciences bachelor programmes and in bachelor programmes at university colleges of education, admission is based on a selective admission process.

Areas/modules of study (*Fächer/Module*) are specified in curricula. As a rule, the completion of two substantial bachelor papers or projects (*Bachelorarbeiten*) are required for awarding the degree. University of applied sciences bachelor programmes, bachelor programmes at university college and some bachelor programmes at universities include an internship or practical training. The programme can conclude with a bachelor examination (*Bachelorprüfung*).

### **Master Programme (*Masterstudium*)**

Admission to a master programme is granted on the basis of the successful completion of a subject-relevant bachelor programme or an equivalent post-secondary qualification. In some master programmes admission is based on a selective admission process.

Areas/modules of study (*Fächer/Module*) are specified in curricula. A core requirement is the completion of a master thesis (*Masterarbeit*). This degree programme concludes with a master examination (*Masterprüfung*). The approval of the master thesis (*Masterarbeit*) is a prerequisite for admission to this examination.

### **Diploma Programme (*Diplomstudium = old system*)**

Admission to a diploma programme is granted upon the basis of the Austrian higher secondary school leaving certificate (*Reifezeugnis*), its foreign equivalent, or the successful completion of a special university entrance qualification examination (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung*). Students of compulsory lower schools who have completed additional schooling in the form of apprenticeships as skilled workers also may take a vocationally based examination acknowledged as equivalent to the higher secondary school leaving certificate (*Berufsmatura*). Admission to diploma programmes in the arts is based on aptitude ascertained by admission examinations. Admission to university of applied sciences diploma programmes may also take place upon the basis of previous vocational or technical experience and qualifications of applicants. In some fields of study (e.g. Human Medicine and Dentistry, and university of applied sciences diploma programmes) admission is based on a selective admission process.

A degree programme may be divided into stages (*Studienabschnitte*). The length of each stage of the degree programme as well as the areas of study (*Fächer*) and content required are articulated in curricula that distinguish between required subjects (*Pflichtfächer*) and electives (*Wahlfächer*). Each stage concludes with a diploma examination (*Diplomprüfung*). University of applied sciences diploma programmes and some diploma programmes at universities include an internship or practical training. The approval of a diploma thesis (*Diplomarbeit*) is a prerequisite for admission to the concluding diploma examination.

### **Doctoral Programme (*Doktoratsstudium*)**

Admission to a doctoral programme at a university is granted on the basis of the successful completion of a subject-relevant diploma or master programme.

Contents and requirements of study are specified in curricula with the focus on the doctoral thesis (*Dissertation*).

tation) as the result of independent research. This degree programme concludes with the approval of the dissertation and with a comprehensive doctoral examination (*Rigorosum*) or a *defensio*.

At universities of applied sciences and at university colleges of education no doctoral programmes are offered.

### Evaluation of performance and grading system (Austrian grading scale)

According to the modalities for examinations outlined in the curricula, achievement may be assessed by oral and written exams or project related work. In principle oral examinations are open to the public.

Austrian Grading scheme	Definition
1	EXCELLENT ( <i>SEHR GUT</i> )
2	GOOD ( <i>GUT</i> )
3	SATISFACTORY ( <i>BEFRIEDIGEND</i> )
4	SUFFICIENT ( <i>GENÜGEND</i> ) (minimum positive grade)
successfully completed	Positive performance, where a strict differentiation is not adequate
5	INSUFFICIENT ( <i>NICHT GENÜGEND</i> )
not completed	Negative performance, where a strict differentiation is not adequate

Grades for comprehensive examinations, i.e. examinations covering materials from various subjects:

positive: *mit Auszeichnung bestanden* (pass with distinction)  
*mit gutem Erfolg bestanden* (pass with merit)  
*bestanden* (pass)

negative: *nicht bestanden* (insufficient)

Source:

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