

1. Austrian FH-sector

The Austrian FH sector has a short history and is still being developed

- the Fachhochschule Studies Act became effective on 1 October 1993
- the first 10 programmes started in the academic year 1994/95
- Meanwhile there are 19 institutions offering 144 programmes and about 22.000 students (2007: about 28.000)

The whole sector has been completely new developed since 1994 combining (public) top-down control and (private) bottom-up initiative → education is not offered by transforming existing educational institutions but by accrediting new programmes

Summing-up the framework conditions

- The course providing bodies are – with two exceptions – privately organized (legal persons under private law, e.g. companies with limited liability, associations or public foundations)
- Public funding
- External Quality Assurance by the FH Council
- The legal control is with the Government

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FH institutions are given greater autonomy to organize themselves

- Decentralisation and deregulation of decision-making process
- to foster the independence, responsibility and flexibility of the FH institutions

Financing concept of study place management

- Costs per study place and year are about 7.600 EURO in technical fields and about 6.400 EURO in the business fields
- Federal government pays only 90 % of the standard costs per study place (6.900 resp. 6.400 EURO)

Amendment of the FH Studies Act of May 2002 that facilitated the introduction of bachelor and master programmes

- Duration of study: Bachelor = 3 years (180 Credits); Master = 1 to 2 years (60 to 120 credits); Diploma = 4 to 5 years (240 to 300 credits)

- The first bachelor programmes started in the academic year 2003/04; the first master programmes will be started in 2004/05

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Educational mandate: Practice-oriented professional education at a higher education level

Basic concept of a FH programme can be characterised as follows

- Description of the vocational fields of activity for which the programme is aimed
- The professional field-specific requirements have to be presented in form of a qualification profile
- This qualification profile forms the basis for the design of the curriculum

The review of the coherence of vocational fields of activity, qualification profile and curriculum by a FH degree programme plays a very important role in the accreditation procedure

2. External quality assurance system

FH Council is the public authority responsible for external quality assurance

All FH programmes (Bachelor's, Master's and Diploma programmes) are subject to accreditation

Accreditation is granted for an approval period of a maximum of 5 years

Tight connection between decision on initial- and re-accreditation of programmes and evaluation of programmes and institutions

- Initial accreditation is compulsory in order to get the approval for a FH programme (accreditation is equivalent to approval)
- The decision on initial accreditation is carried out by the members of the FH Council themselves
- Each decision of the FH Council on the re-accreditation of programmes is based on a previously conducted evaluation

3. Accreditation in the national context

Evaluation = quality improvement? ↔ Accreditation = quality control?

No → Accreditation = Evaluation + decision on quality + approval

Accreditation

- is a formal and independent decision, indicating that a program offered and/or an Higher Education Institution is meeting certain standards
- is based on a previously conducted evaluation procedure that estimates the value or benefit of measures with respect to the compliance with certain standards
- includes quality improvement according to the evaluation results
- ends with a positive or negative decision

Aim of accreditation

- to assure that the institutions meet their responsibility for the quality of the programmes offered
- to guarantee students, society and employers that the programme has to undergo a quality assurance procedure before it has been approved or re-approved

4. Initial accreditation

Programmes are designed on behalf of the course providing bodies by expert teams with the required academic and professional qualifications

An application for initial accreditation/approval of a programme is submitted to the FH Council according to the “accreditation guidelines”

The applications are examined by the office of the FH Council and by the members of the FH Council in plenary meetings

- if there is no expertise in the FH Council written expert opinions are asked for
- the accreditation procedure has to ensure that the legal prerequisites have been met
- requests by the FH Council to take certain measures to improve the quality of the programme are part of the procedure

Accreditation Models in HE, Rome, 13-15.11.03

- from 1994 until now about 40 % of the applications have been rejected by the FH Council

The most important question that needs to be answered positively for an (initial) accreditation is

- whether the programme is able to fulfil its educational mandate in a reliable and transparent way

5. Re-accreditation Fields of institutional and degree programme-related evaluation

No	Fields of institutional evaluation	No	Fields of degree programme-related evaluation
1	Strategy and organisation	1	Educational goals and teaching methods
2	Quality management and HR development	2	Students
3	Degree programmes	3	Organisation and quality assurance
4	Students	4	Human resources
5	Applied research & development	5	Infrastructure and applied research & development
6	Resources, infrastructure and funds		
7	Internationalisation, co-operation and communication		

The aim of self-evaluation

To show in a transparent, well-founded and reliable way how the aims, requirements and expectations as defined in the fields to be evaluated are met

The aim of external evaluation

To evaluate, on the basis of the self-evaluation, whether the aims, requirements and expectations as defined in the fields to be evaluated have been convincingly and transparently fulfilled

5. Re-accreditation
Examples of institutional evaluation

8.1	Strategy and organisation
8.1.1	The FH institution has a clearly formulated strategic orientation that has been put forth in a public mission statement. It sees itself as a learning organisation and ensures the advancement of the institution based on its strategic orientation.
8.1.2	The mission statement lays down the educational and research goals and serves to position the institution within the academic and social environment. The desired goals are appropriately communicated within the institution.
8.1.3	The decision-making processes, competences and responsibilities are clearly defined, communicated and implemented. The implemented organisational structure and procedure ensures the institution's autonomy and is critically reviewed regarding its efficiency and effectiveness.
8.1.4	The organisational structure and procedure ensures that the faculty is integrated in the decision-making processes related to study and research and that the students are integrated in decision-making processes related to education. The faculty's autonomy is ensured in a way that is appropriate for a higher-education institution.
8.1.5	The creation or promotion of a corporate identity is ensured. Based on the exchange of knowledge between the experts in the fields of teaching, research, business, administration, etc. who work in the FH sector, the process of knowledge management is organised.

5. Re-accreditation
Examples of programme-related evaluation

9.1	Educational goals and teaching methods
9.1.1	The educational goals have been clearly defined and everybody involved is familiar with them. The connection between the vocational activities, the qualification profile, the curriculum and the teaching concept has been described in as conclusive way and documented transparently.
9.1.2	Placements form an integral part of the curriculum. The educational goal of the placement has been defined and everybody who is involved either in the institution or in the company is familiar with it.
9.1.3	The process of selecting, qualifying, tutoring and assessing the placements is defined and implemented accordingly. The working relationship between the FH institution, the company and the students has been defined in a contract.
9.1.4	The knowledge and skills to be acquired in an FH degree programme based on the vocational and higher-education requirements are documented in a sufficient and transparent way within the scope of a qualification profile.
9.1.5	The curriculum provides the relevant scientific knowledge and understanding, the methodological-analytical skills, as well as the multidisciplinary qualifications to be able to meet the aims related to the vocational field in a way that is adequate for a higher education institution.
9.1.6	The selection of the related disciplines is justified and the relation of the respective discipline to the desired vocational field is described.
9.1.7	The contents of the curriculum as well as the teaching methods used to implement it are suitable for reaching the educational goals set forth. The proportion of the different types of courses (lectures, training courses, seminars, placements, projects, etc.) is balanced with regard to the educational goals. The acquisition of active competences typical of higher-education institutions and vocational competences is encouraged.