

## University Courses at Private Universities

### Definition and legal conditions

University courses are continuing education courses<sup>1</sup>.

On the basis of the degree or certificate awarded, the University Act of 2002 distinguishes between two types of university courses:

#### 1. University courses leading to an academic degree

The curriculum of a university course may provide scope for the course to culminate in an internationally recognised master's degree provided the course's admission requirements, academic content and standards are comparable with similar master's programmes abroad. There is no legally-specified minimum content for university courses that lead to a master's degree. However, 75-120 ECTS are internationally recognised for master's programmes of continuing education.

#### 2. University courses leading to an academic title

If a course does not culminate in an academic degree, a title of "Academic..." (along with a description characterising the content of the course) may be awarded instead, provided that the university course in question covers at least 60 ECTS. A title such as this is not an academic degree.

The University Act itself does not define any admissions criteria for university courses, but refers only to international norms. As a rule, the usual international prerequisite for admissions to a continuing master's-programme is a completed undergraduate level programme (bachelor's). Otherwise, continuing master's programme may base admission on a commensurate professional qualification.

Unlike consecutive master's programmes, university courses leading to a master's degree do not immediately authorise a student to go on to a doctoral programme. The prerequisite for graduates of university courses to be admitted to a doctoral programme is that the university offering the doctoral programme recognizes the university course as equivalent to a consecutive master's course and/or the Diploma programmes (§ 64 section 4 of the University Act of 2002).

### Procedure

As the University Act of 2002 defines university courses as academic programmes, they require accreditation just as do degree programmes offered by private universities. Thus the same assessment criteria are to be used for the accreditation of university courses as are used for those degree programmes at the private university.

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<sup>1</sup> Austrian University law (§ 51 section 2 # 2 and 21 of University Act 2002) distinguishes between degree programmes (diploma, bachelor's, consecutive and master's degree and doctoral programmes) and continuing education courses (university courses).

A university course must be compatible with the overall profile and mission statement of the institution, while also being feasible in terms of the private university's own resources.

An appropriate share of teaching staff must be recruited from within the permanent staff of the private university, in order to ensure the connection is made between teaching and research. At the same time, this ought not to result in a resource drain from other courses; in other words, the staff count for other courses as laid down in the basic criteria defined by the Accreditation Council must be maintained.

Given that university courses are usually offered as part-time academic programmes, both the academic programme and the workload ought to be planned with the working student in mind. For more detail on this point, please see the Accreditation Council's guideline concerning part-time academic programmes.

#### **Other educational offerings by private universities**

Other educational offerings (such as lectures, courses, seminars or training sessions), regardless of duration or content, are not subject to the accreditation requirement provided they are not designated as university courses and culminate neither in the award of an academic degree nor in an academic title.