

GUIDELINES for Academic Studies of International Students at Austrian Universities¹

As of February 2012

Preamble

With these “Guidelines for Academic Studies of International Students at Austrian Universities” the universities reaffirm their sustained interest in attracting and hosting qualified international students and (young) scientists.

The guidelines’ objective is to establish a basis for the fields of information, admission and support and thus define a set of common minimum standards on which international students can rely. However, it is strongly recommended to students to obtain their own information on the regulations valid at the individual universities. The present guidelines are directed at both international degree programme students and international students participating in exchange programmes. The guiding principle is to grant international students the same rights as those granted to Austrian and EU students of equivalent status, whenever possible, and additionally to offer them any services and support that they need as international guests. The following minimum standards are recommendations that have already been introduced at practically all Austrian universities, and many higher-education institutions even offer a broader range of services.

I. Information, advising, counselling and marketing

1. The universities commit themselves to providing comprehensive information – preferably also in English – on the study programmes they offer, the admission requirements and procedures and any costs that accrue as well as on the local study and living conditions. They also refer to important sources of information, in particular to

- Universities Austria (<http://www.uniko.ac.at/index.php?lang=EN>)

- the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research

¹ These guidelines were written according to the “National Code of Conduct on Foreign Students at German Universities”.

(OeAD-GmbH) (<http://www.oead.at/index.php?id=3017&L=1>)

- the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (<http://www.bmwf.gv.at/home/>)
- the Austrian National Union of Students (<http://www.oeh.ac.at/#/en/home/>)
- the International Students' Office of the Austrian National Union of Students (<http://www.oeh.ac.at/#/en/organisation/departments-and-units/international-students-office/>)

A compilation of information on education, research, and life in Austria can be obtained from the OeAD-GmbH (<http://www.oead.at/index.php?id=3&L=1>).

2. The information on the study programmes and other university courses and programmes includes a clear description of the knowledge, skills and professional qualifications acquired as part of the degree. Information on job opportunities in Austria and the European Union may be provided as well.

3. The information on study programmes also includes details on

- types of assessment (evaluation method, examination procedure),
- language requirements,
- previous educational requirements and recognition procedures for previous academic coursework and examinations,
- any costs that may accrue for university courses,
- possible fee waivers, scholarships and grants, as well as
- important dates and deadlines.

4. As a rule, study programmes at Austrian universities are taught in German. If another language (in most cases English) is specified as the language of instruction for part of or the entire programme, the university will ensure that the instructors have the required language proficiency and skills and that appropriate teaching material in the foreign language is available. For students who do not have adequate proficiency in the German language, important information – including general information on everyday life at university – will be provided in English or possibly in the language of instruction.

II. Admission and recognition of examinations

1. The decision on the admission of international students lies within the scope of the legal provisions of the individual university. The university also sets the admission requirements, whose content is documented in a generally accessible form.
2. Under Austrian law, procedures and regulations different from those applicable to students from EU countries may apply to the selection and admission of international students from non-EU countries ("third countries").
3. The admission of international applicants to degree programmes in Austria generally requires proof of sufficient proficiency in the German language (according to the criteria of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Universities may have deviating requirements depending on the legislation (§ 63 UnivG (Universities Act)). All information concerning this will be provided in a way that ensures transparency.
4. If a student applies for recognition of positively assessed examinations at a university, the responsible office at the university will decide on this in a verifiable procedure and within an adequate time frame. Recognition may also be subject to certain conditions. Decisions on recognition are based on the principle of "equivalence, not identical accordance" for an overall analysis and assessment and not on a schematic comparison.
5. If individual modules and courses cannot be offered, the university will make an effort to provide adequate replacements.

III. Academic, language and social support for international students

1. The university will also provide specific orientation for international students before they start their studies. It will provide the contact details of the appropriate staff to registered international students for their informed questions.
2. The university will support the students in acquiring and improving their German language skills by offering pre-study and study-integrated language courses (also for a fee). If the university itself does not offer language courses, it will inform students of other possibilities.
3. The university endeavours to offer programmes and contacts in order to help international students integrate into the university, everyday and professional life as well as the cultural and social environment.
4. The university will provide information on the housing market and student housing.
5. Whenever possible, the university will provide international students with the names of their contact persons at the university and at the local authorities that issue residence permits and will assist them in case of uncertainties.

6. The university will inform students about the applicable legal regulation concerning intellectual property rights. At an early stage, students will be advised about the nature and consequences of plagiarism in academic and artistic work.

IV. Services for international students on and after completing their studies

The university will ensure to provide international students with the same services as Austrian students.

This concerns in particular:

- Degree certificates
- Information on job opportunities
- Information for graduates (e.g. alumni networks)

V. Assistance with problems

The university offers general information to international students. In addition, a contact person is assigned for further enquiries in case of problems. Whenever possible, a central administrative unit should be appointed.

VI. Implementation

The universities are asked to use these “Guidelines for Academic Studies of International Students at Austrian Universities”, to make them available to international students and, if applicable, to inform Universities Austria about this step.

Contact: <http://www.uniko.ac.at/index.php?lang=EN>