

Report on the outcome of the accreditation procedure for the bachelor degree programme „Computer Science“ to be offered by the Webster Vienna Private University in Vienna

1 Subject of the application

The Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) conducted an accreditation procedure for the degree programme mentioned above in accordance to § 24 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG), BGBI I Nr. 74/2011 as amended, in conjunction with § 2 Private Higher Education Act (PrivHG), BGBI. I Nr. 74/2011 as amended and § 17 Decree on Private Higher Education 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021). In accordance to § 21 HS-QSG AQ Austria publishes the following outcome report:

2 Procedural steps

The accreditation procedure comprised the following steps:

Procedural step	Date
Application submitted on	08.05.2024
Formal examination of application by AQ Austria Secretariat	01.08.2024
Appointment of experts and decision on the procedure to be followed	21.08.2024
Notification of applicant institution on appointment of experts	23.08.2024
Online preparatory meeting with experts	18.10.2024
Revised application submitted on	04.11.2024

Notification on completion of formal examination of application	22.11.2024
Submission of additional application materials before site-visit	04.03.2025
Preparatory meeting with experts	11.03.2025
Site-visit	12.03.2025
Submission of additional application materials after site-visit	19.03.2025
Online consultation with experts on report	13.05.2025
Completion of expert report	25.05.2025
Expert report forwarded to applicant institution for comment	26.05.2025
Statement of costs to applicant	28.05.2025
Comment of applicant on expert report transmitted	04.06.2025
Comment of applicant on expert report transmitted to experts	05.06.2025
Comment on statement of costs	-
Receipt of payment	04.06.2025
Accreditation decision by the Board of AQ Austria	25.06.2025

3 Decision on accreditation

By resolution of 25.06.2025 the Board of AQ Austria decided to grant the application by the Bildungsverein für die Freunde der Webster University (St.Louis, USA) of 08.05.2024 for accreditation of the bachelor degree programme "Computer Science" in accordance with §§ 24, 25 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG), BGBI I Nr. 74/2011 as amended by BGBI I Nr. 50/2024, in conjunction with § 2 Private Higher Education Act (PrivHG), BGBI I Nr. 77/2020 as amended by BGBI I Nr. 50/2024, in conjunction with § 9 Decree on Private Higher Education 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021), in conjunction with § 56 General Administrative Procedure Act (AVG), BGBI Nr. 51/1991 as amended by BGBI I Nr. 88/2023, under the following conditions:

1. According to § 17 (2) 1 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 within 24 months after delivery of the notification on the accreditation decision, the private university will present proof of having adapted the curriculum for the emphasis track "Artificial Intelligence" by aligning it with UNESCO's "AI-Competency Framework" (2024) and including topics on AI ethics, the EU AI Act, the Digital Service Act and the Data Act.
2. According to § 17 (2) 9 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 within 24 months after delivery of the notification on the accreditation decision, the private university will present proof of having established a clear procedure for the recognition of non-formally acquired prior learning and having made it available for students.
3. According to § 17 (6) PrivH-AkkVO 2021 within 24 months after delivery of the notification on the accreditation decision, the private university will present proof of having set up the research and teaching infrastructure required for the fields of machine-learning and artificial intelligence. The required infrastructure must be effectively in place and available.

4. According to § 17 (7) PrivH-AkkVO 2021 within 24 months after delivery of the notification on the accreditation decision, the private university will present proof of having established relevant cooperations for the AI specialization track. An extended list of relevant cooperations, including an adequate documentation (e.g. by a MoU) indicating their scope, range and liability, is to be presented.

The decision was approved on 01.08.2025 by the competent federal minister. The notification on the accreditation decision was delivered on 05.08.2025.

4 Annexes

- Expert report of 25.05.2025
- Comment on the expert report of 03.06.2025

Expert report on the accreditation procedure for the bachelor programme „Computer Science“ of the Webster Vienna Private University

pursuant to § 7 of the Accreditation Decree on Private Higher Education 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021)

Vienna, 25.05.2025

1 Overview of the accreditation procedure

Information on the applicant institution	
Applicant institution	Bildungsverein für die Freunde der Webster University (St. Louis, USA)
Sites of the higher education institution	Vienna
Legal status	Association / Verein
Initial institutional accreditation	09.02.2001
Latest extension of institutional accreditation	16.12.2022
Number of students	579 (WS 2024)
Accredited study programmes	11

Information on the accreditation application	
Programme title	Computer Science
Type of study programme	Bachelor programme
ECTS credit points	240
Standard duration of studies	6 Semester
Planned number of students per academic year	30
Academic degree	Bachelor of Science
Organizational form	Full time
Language/s	English
Sites of the study programme	Vienna
Tuition fee	22.500 Euro

The applicant institution submitted the accreditation application on 08.05.2024. According to the decision of AQ Austria's board on 21.08.2024, the following experts were nominated for this procedure:

Name	Function and Institution	Area of competence
Prof. in Dr. in Gabrijela Dreo Rodosek	Chair for Communication Systems and Network Security, University of the Bundeswehr Munich Founding Director of the CODE Research Institute	scientific qualification in the field of cyber security
Prof. Dr. Ricardo Usbeck	Chair for Information Systems, in particular Artificial Intelligence and Explainability, Leuphana University Lüneburg	scientific qualification in the field of computer science / artificial intelligence
DDr. DI Mag. Florian Skopik	Head of the Cyber Security Research Program, Austrian Institute for Technology	scientific qualification in the field of cyber security
DI Laura Waltersdorfer	PhD candidate at Technical University Vienna Project staff Member at the Institute for Data, Process and Knowledge Management, Vienna University of Economics and Business	qualification in the field of quality assurance

On 12.03.2025 a site-visit on the applicant institution's premises took place, at their Vienna location.

2 Preliminary remarks

By way of introduction, the expert panel wants to stress that the following report, including the assessment of the accreditation criteria, is based on the *current* status of the planned Computer Science programme.

In 2022, Webster Vienna Private University (WVPU) has already submitted two Bachelor degree programmes in the field of Computer Science for accreditation („IT Security Systems“ and „Software Engineering“). The expert panel appointed for that accreditation procedure, however, did not recommend accreditation to the Board of AQ Austria. In recommending the rejection of the two distinct programmes, the experts recognized most criteria as met but also identified critical deficiencies, and noted that there was too strong of a similarity between the two programmes in terms of content. In its response to the expert report, WVPU merged the two study plans into one Computer Science bachelor programme with two emphases (Cybersecurity, and Programming). Nevertheless, the Board of AQ Austria concluded that serious shortcomings persisted and decided not to admit accreditation.

In mid-2024, WVPU has now submitted a renewed application for an undergraduate Computer Science programme with two emphasis tracks in artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity (CYS). The expert panel appointed for this procedure commends WVPU for its plans to introduce a Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science (CS). This development is considered a strategically sound step and a meaningful enhancement of, as well as a valuable addition to its roster of academic programmes.

However, the introduction of this new degree programme is inseparably linked to establishing a truly new department at WVPU. This process has already begun and here the expert panel wants to highlight – as particularly positive – the recruitment of [REDACTED]. His expertise in the field of Computer Science in general and AI in particular is considered an important and promising step towards setting up a Computer Science programme and the development of the associated department.

At the same time, the expert panel identified a crucial lack of expertise in cybersecurity at WVPU, which is currently envisioned as one of the core subject areas in the new Computer Science programme. According to the current recruitment plan submitted by WVPU, hiring of the *first* staff with a cybersecurity background is scheduled only for 2029. This gap seriously impairs the content and the structure of the planned degree programme, and the ability of students to successfully study this 'Cybersecurity' track to such an extent that, in the experts' assessment, the issue cannot be addressed by just imposing a set of conditions. Thus, the overall assessment of the whole project in its current form is negative.

The expert panel wants to explicitly emphasize that the negative assessment is only caused by the 'Cybersecurity' track of the programme. If WVPU is willing to postpone the introduction of a 'Cybersecurity' track and just start the Computer Science degree programme with a focus on 'Artificial Intelligence', the assessment would change – if WVPU takes into account the recommendations of the expert panel outlined in this report. Implementing such an AI-focused Computer Science programme appears, in the expert panel's opinion, to be much more realistic and could be convincingly based on the structures already in place at WVPU and on the plans described in the application documents as well as during the site-visit. If executed carefully and diligently, the expert panel would recommend the accreditation of the Computer Science programme with an AI focus to the Board of AQ Austria.

For further development, the expert panel sees a plausible way to introduce cybersecurity as an additional track in the Computer Science programme or possibly even as a separate degree programme – but only when the Computer Science department has been successfully established and, crucially, cybersecurity expertise is available in-house at WVPU.

3 Assessment and evaluation according to assessment criteria specified in PrivH-AkkVO 2021

3.1 § 17 para. 2 subpara. 1–9: Degree programme and degree programme management

Taking into account a heterogeneous student body, the following criteria shall apply. In the case of degree programmes with special profile elements, the descriptions shall address these characteristics defining the profile. Special profile elements are, for example, access to a regulated profession, mandatory vocational practice, study formats alongside professional activity, dual degree programmes, distance-learning degree programmes, joint study programmes or jointly offered study programmes.

1. The degree programme is oriented towards the profile and the strategic objectives of the private university college

The planned Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science aligns with Webster Vienna Private University's strategic goals, fosters institutional synergies, and enhances the existing body of study programmes in a coherent and integrated manner. According to the accreditation application, adding a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programme to WVPU's more social science-oriented study portfolio helps to broaden the student base and to foster interdisciplinary exchange. The accreditation document also states that "[t]he introduction of the computer science programme will support the university's vision to solidify its position in Austria and Central Europe as an internationally competitive institution of higher education through innovative programs led by a roster of international faculty — forming the core of WVPU's student-centred approach to higher education. It is also a first step in the maturation of WVPU's program offerings, enriching both the practical and quantitative aspects of the university's program offerings and research profile."

As further discussed during the site-visit, the humanistic profile of the private university should be extended towards more data-driven, analytic subjects that can complement the social science orientation of the private university (political science, international relations) due to the importance of technical advancements and the mission of the European Union to foster this type of skill set.

Consequently, in the experts' opinion, the introduction of the new Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science is oriented towards the profile and strategic objectives of WVPU.

The expert panel considers the criterion **to be met**.

2. The profile and intended learning outcomes of the degree programme

- a. have been clearly defined;
- b. comprise discipline-specific-scientific and/or scientific-artistic as well as personal and social skills;
- c. comply with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities and
- d. comply with the respective qualification level of the National Qualifications Framework.

In the expert panel's opinion, the profile of the planned Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science is clearly defined (a), as it contains clearly identified skills from a disciplinary perspective. The defined learning outcomes (1 Demonstrate a mastery of computer science/ 2 Apply knowledge of computer science to solve complex and unpredictable problems / 3 Technological advances impacting social issues and professional practice / 4 Communicate technical material effectively and professionally) are in line with international standards such as the Bildungsstandards Informatik by the Gesellschaft für Informatik (in Germany). The learning outcomes are supplemented by interdisciplinary aspects from the WVPU's core curriculum (CCM), such as different seminars providing perspectives on understanding the social impact of science and scientific methods.

The Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science is planned with two emphasis tracks: 'Cybersecurity' and 'Artificial Intelligence'. The programme does include discipline-specific-scientific as well as personal and social skills (b).

The AI track is characterized by three aspects: 1) Fundamental aspects of artificial intelligence and the potential benefits to companies and organizations; 2) Utilize a programming language to manage Machine Learning techniques and 3) Develop Machine Learning techniques and algorithms to resolve artificial intelligence problems in different areas of industry. In the expert panel's opinion, in the written accreditation application, AI often seemed vague in the original application and like an afterthought (e.g. using generic concepts such as "a programming language" or "machine learning techniques"). Regarding the AI track, AI2's emphasis on "manage machine learning techniques" raises the question whether the implementation and theory of machine learning, as well as the most significant trends such as Generative AI (e.g., Large Language Models (LLMs), transformer architectures) will also be taught. The initial application documents were later updated [REDACTED] after the site-visit. This updated syllabus, supplemented by [REDACTED] explanations during the site-visit, provided more details and, in the opinion of the expert panel, is now up to standard.

The CYS track is defined as follows: 1) Demonstrate an understanding of the vocabulary of cybersecurity concepts, terms, and phraseology; 2) Demonstrate a working knowledge of cybersecurity threats to and defenses of IT systems and 3) Explain the roles, responsibilities, and tools of a cybersecurity professional. For this CYS track, more techniques are described, and the track itself is backed up by Webster-Network infrastructure, e.g., the students are provided free access to Webster University's Center for Cybersecurity recognized by e.g. the National Security Agency of the USA. However, the Cybersecurity track, in the expert panels' opinion, demonstrates a lack of conceptual depth and strategic coherence. While numerous topics are being mentioned, they are addressed only superficially, and with a notable omission of critical areas such as AI-driven cyber defense.

Consequently, the programme does comply with the requirements of Computer Science and AI in general as aspired professional fields of activities (c) as well as with qualification level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework (d).

The expert panel considers the criterion **to be met**.

Recommendations:

- The experts recommend strengthening and focusing on the AI track for the first few years (possibly until 2029) and removing the CS track for now, as the new programme involves building an entirely new department.
- The experts advise dropping the Cybersecurity track, as its curriculum is not up to standard. This also should be done, to avoid insufficient programme and course development with divided attention between the specializations. After successful implementation of the degree programme with an AI track, adding the Cybersecurity track could be reconsidered by WVPU after the necessary staff with expertise in cybersecurity is recruited, and the whole new department is standing on a more stable basis.
- The expert panel recommends considering the UNESCO (2024) "AI-Competency-Framework" in future iterations of the AI specialization track curriculum. The latest AI track curriculum needs further updating to follow standard requirements and state-of-the-art techniques such as Large Language Models, Knowledge Graphs, Diffusion Models and to follow AI literacy aspects. The courses in the AI track are mostly focused on traditional machine learning/deep learning approaches, in other words, subsymbolic AI. There is yet no mention of symbolic ones (e.g. reasoning, rule-based, logic-based, knowledge graphs, ontologies). WVPU should re-evaluate this on a timely basis (also taking into account the recently started lighthouse project with many well-established Austrian universities, focusing on neuro-symbolic AI combining both of these approaches (see the Austrian initiative <https://www.bilateral-ai.net/home>)). This review should confirm that the curriculum also includes a course on the aspects of AI ethics and legal topics such as the EU AI Act, Digital Service Act, Data Act.
- The expert panel recommends removing all remaining obsolete references (for example from the diploma supplement) to the application documents from the earlier accreditation procedure - such as "programming". All this content needs to be removed or adapted to correspond to the current study programme.

3. The name of the degree programme and the academic degree correspond to the degree programme's profile and intended learning outcomes.

For the expert panel, profile and intended learning outcomes of the planned degree programme meet the field's standard expectations for a computer science programme. The presence (or absence) of emphases' tracks does not fundamentally change this assessment. Thus, the name and the academic degree – Bachelor of Science in Computer Science – corresponds to the profile of the planned degree programme.

The expert panel considers the criterion **to be met**.

4. The degree programme

- a. complies with the scientific and/or scientific-artistic and didactic requirements of the respective subject or subjects;
- b. comprises defined core subject areas which represent the most important subjects of the degree programme and thus the main competences to be acquired;
- c. ensures by its content and structure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- d. comprises modules and/or courses with learning and teaching as well as examination methods suitable for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and build on the overall concept of the degree programme;
- e. takes into account the connection of research and teaching and/or research and the appreciation of the arts and
- f. encourages the active involvement of students in the learning process.

After a careful review of the written application, the discussions during the site-visit and the supplementary documents provided afterwards by WVPU, the experts conclude that the degree programme *without the emphases tracks* is well planned and considers the entire criterion to be fulfilled in this respect. The overall assessment differs, however, because shortcomings with the AI and/or the CYS tracks.

- a) The expert panel considers the criterion (a) (complies with the scientific and didactic requirements) to be met for the AI track but *not* the CYS track.
- b) The expert panel considers the criterion (defined core subjects representing intended main competences) (b) to be met for both emphasis tracks.

The written application lists 7 core subject areas for the general computer science part of the programme (Math for Computer Science, Computer Programming I and II, Systems Analysis and Design, Data Structures I and II, Thesis) and 2 core subject areas for each of the planned emphases tracks (AI: Introduction to AI and Foundations of Machine Learning; CYS: Cybersecurity and Internet Architecture and Cyber Attacks and Defenses). For the expert group, these adequately correspond to the key competences to be acquired by graduates.

- c) The expert panel considers the criterion (content and structure allow the achievement the intended learning outcomes) (c) as met for both tracks.

Overall, the content and structure as well as the sequence of courses enable students to acquire the intended learning outcomes. The various teaching formats ensure both the integration of theory and practice via the practical semester and the encouragement of active participation during courses.

A complementary selection of general, computer science-specific, and in-depth (CYS, AI) courses ensures the learning outcomes.

- d) The expert panel also considers criterion (d) to be met (courses and exams suitable for the achievement of the intended learning outcome).

e) The expert panel considers the criterion (takes into account the connection of research and teaching) (e) as not met.

With only one person of the planned staff available [REDACTED] and no recruitment planned for the CYS track until 2029, there is no clear path yet to integrate subject-specific research into the classroom. Active involvement of the research staff in the courses as well as integration of research results in the courses will occur only once a comprehensive body of researchers and lecturers is available. As for the CYS track specifically, the recruitments planned at the moment can only cover the AI aspects of this criterion.

f) The expert panel considers the criterion (encourages the active involvement of students in the learning process) (f) as met for both tracks.

The various forms of lectures (seminars, projects, and practicum) allow the students to participate actively in the courses. The site-visit also demonstrated to the experts that students have the opportunity to reach staff in their offices for discussions about the learning content.

Overall, the expert group considers this criterion **not to be met**.

Recommendations:

- For future development, should the Computer Science programme feature two emphases tracks for students to choose from, the applicant institution should introduce an advisory event at the end of the fourth semester before students choose a specialization track – both to support students in their choice and to avoid an unbalanced distribution of students (and the administrative, didactic, and financial downsides associated with it).
- The applicant institution should provide detailed information on the different types and elements of exams (as provided to the group of experts in a document after the site-visit).
- The experts recommend clarifying whether an exam may be repeated if the grade is lower than B.

5. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is applied correctly to the degree programme. The workload related to the individual modules and/or courses, expressed in ECTS credits, makes it possible that the intended learning outcomes are achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. In the case of degree programmes for working professionals, the professional activity is taken into account.

The planned degree programme has a standard period of study of 4 years and consists of a total of 240 ECTS credits. Each course has a clear number of ECTS credits assigned to it, based on a standard workload of 25 hours per credit, ensuring that learning outcomes are achievable within the expected timeframe. The planned degree programme is structured to support timely completion (minimum 3 years, regular time 4 years), without excessive workloads or agglomeration of exams. ECTS credits are also appropriately allocated to internships, project work, and the final thesis.

The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

6. The Diploma Supplement is specific to the respective degree programme and suitable to support international mobility of students as well as graduates and facilitates academic and professional recognition of the acquired qualifications.

The Diploma Supplement follows the official EU/CoE/UNESCO template and is to be published in German and English. The supplement provides a programme-specific overview that supports both academic and professional recognition in Austria and internationally. It includes detailed information on the awarded qualification, the grading system, and the degree's context within the Austrian higher education framework.

The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

Recommendation:

- While the diploma supplement generally follows the required structure and supports international academic and professional recognition, it currently still refers to an outdated emphasis track titled "Programming". This reference does not reflect the current structure of the degree programme and must be updated to ensure alignment with the actual curriculum (Artificial Intelligence track) and learning outcomes. The expert panel recommends updating the Diploma Supplement accordingly. Furthermore, the details about the CS emphasis track should be removed from the supplement in case the programme is introduced without it.

7. The requirements for admission to the degree programme

- a. have been clearly defined and
- b. contribute to the achievement of the qualification objectives.

The admission requirements for the planned degree programme are clearly laid out and include appropriate general educational qualifications, such as a secondary school exit exam certificate, a recommendation letter and English language certificates, as well as additional degree-specific criteria like minimum grades in mathematics or extracurricular activities. These requirements are generally aligned with the programme's qualification objectives.

The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the admission criteria — particularly the current emphasis on high school mathematics grades — should be reviewed regularly. Given that such grades may not reliably predict future academic success, the review should ensure that all criteria remain relevant, evidence-based, and effective in identifying applicants with the highest potential to succeed in the programme.

8. The admission procedure to the degree programme

- a. has been clearly defined;
- b. is transparent for all involved and
- c. ensures a fair selection of the applicants.

The admission procedure to the degree programme is clearly defined, transparent, and merit-based. It is overseen by a WVPU Admissions Committee, which meets at fixed dates several times per year and subsequently communicates its admissions decisions. Decisions are made based on mathematics performance, IT skills, and relevant prior experience of the applicants. Interviews are conducted only on a request basis. When applications exceed available places, a waiting list is created based on the rankings, ensuring a fair selection process.

The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

9. The procedures for the recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired competences in terms of crediting towards examinations or parts of the degree programme

- a. have been clearly defined
- b. and are transparent for all involved

Procedures for the recognition of formally acquired competences are in place and clearly documented. The experts conclude that the criteria used are transparent, accessible to students, and based on objective standards aligned with learning outcomes. Credit transfer mechanisms are implemented in accordance with the ECTS framework, and information on recognition is publicly available. The programme actively supports student and staff mobility and maintains established cooperation projects with both national and international higher education institutions. Procedures for mobility, including recognition of credits from partner institutions, are formally documented to ensure transparency and comparability.

While a process for the recognition of non-formally acquired learning is provided, its current implementation only partially meets this criterion. This type of recognition is described in the application but lacks clear formal documentation or publication, limiting transparency in the expert panel's view. Given that technical and mathematical courses often serve as essential foundations for more advanced studies, clearer guidelines are needed to preserve academic integrity and progression. Although the process is based on demonstrating course-level learning outcomes, the specific criteria for evaluation – such as rubrics or objectivity – are not detailed. During the site-visit, there was some clarification provided to the experts that external reviewers would be tasked conducting this evaluation, but not much more information beyond that. In the opinion of the expert group, a review of the clarification must be conducted within two years. This review should confirm that the criteria for evaluation have been effectively implemented and made available to applicants.

The expert panel considers the criterion **to be partially met under condition**.

Condition: Within two years of notification of the decision the applicant institution conducts a review and clarification of the criteria for the recognition of non-formally acquired competences

within two years of notification of the decision. This review should confirm that the criteria for evaluation are being effectively implemented.

Recommendation:

- For recognition of non-formally acquired competences, the expert panel suggests reviewing the 9-course limit and restricting technical or mathematical courses.

3.2 § 17 para. 3 subpara. 1-2: Research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts

1. Subject-specific research or development activities, respectively, in compliance with the scientific standards of the respective subject or the respective subjects have been planned for the degree programme.

In its written application, WVPU has only outlined a preliminary research program in the field of Artificial Intelligence since, at the time of writing this report, only the head of the department was appointed. Consequently, while the research program in the field of AI can be evaluated, no comparable details are available for the field of cybersecurity. Therefore, in the opinion of the expert panel, this criterion as well cannot be sufficiently met with respect to the planned Cybersecurity emphasis track.

However, [REDACTED], a distinguished expert in Artificial Intelligence, is in the process of transferring to WVPU as a permanent staff member of the newly established department and has already outlined a preliminary research program. According to him, during the first three years, the research will focus on various deep learning topics, covering both fundamental and applied computer science.

The successful acquisition of relevant research projects, which secure external funding and create opportunities for collaboration with partner institutions, is essential for establishing a high-quality and high-impact research environment at WVPU. WVPU is embedded in a network of partner institutions, primarily other Webster Network Universities, and also participates in the ERASMUS+ program, which facilitates (international) collaboration. Additionally, WVPU maintains an exchange program for both students and staff, which should promote idea exchange and support the professional development of academic personnel.

Since WVPU is new to the field of computer science and the department is still being established, there is no existing track record in this area. However, [REDACTED] is already in the process of initiating three nationally funded research projects through his academic network, which should provide the necessary momentum to launch the research program of the new department at WVPU. In the expert panel's opinion, sufficient subject-specific research activities, in compliance with the scientific standards of the discipline (i.e. for the field of Artificial Intelligence) have been planned for the degree programme.

Due to the lack of a substantial research programme in cybersecurity, the experts consider the criterion **to be not met**.

2. The permanent research and teaching staff assigned to the degree programme is involved in these research and development activities.

According to the written application, for full and associate professors, research should be a central task according to their job profiles. A substantial amount of time for research is reserved in the budget calculations. In particular, WVPU reserves for its permanent research and teaching staff roughly a third of the time for teaching and two-thirds of the paid time for research.

Given that WVPU intends to hire only two faculty members in the first year (of which only one was hired by the time of the site-visit), it is questionable for the expert panel, whether these assumptions are reasonable, given that courses need to be prepared outside the classroom and also administrative tasks need to be carried out. In the first years, it also opens the considerable risk that an unplanned departure of a faculty member might cause major disruptions in the teaching of the curriculum. WVPU believes that such disruptions can be mitigated through (temporary) faculty transfers from other Webster Network campuses. However, no formal agreement for such an event appears to be in place at present.

Nevertheless, it indicates in expert panel's opinion that WVPU does in principle indeed plan that their staff substantially participates in research activities. Staff are further supposed to work in funded research projects. The integration of research into teaching seems credible, since the personnel giving the lectures is also supposed to spend time on research activities.

Research and development work of full-time teaching staff should be diverse and comprise besides the actual research work in Research & Development (R&D) projects, the publication of articles in relevant journals and at academic conferences. This is also relevant for the knowledge transfer within the community and vital to increasing reputation and visibility.

The involvement of students in research and development activities is given by the opportunity to carry out their practicums and bachelor theses as part of R&D projects at WVPU. While it is noteworthy that research will have to be built up from the scratch, according to the site-visit, WVPU is committed to investing the required time. The first personnel hired will have two years to build up a research area so that students in their third year can then be involved in the course of their practicums.

Due to the existing study programmes in business and finance at WVPU, the expert panel assesses that interdisciplinarity is realistically possible too, especially focusing on machine learning and AI, where first collaboration opportunities have already been identified (e.g., in the area of business analytics).

The experts consider the criterion **to be met**, given that the planned staff is indeed hired and able to carry out the research duties as planned.

Recommendation:

- While the proposed allocation of one-third of the time for teaching and two-thirds for research is reasonable in the long term, we recommend adopting a more realistic approach during the initial phase of the programme. Newly hired staff will need to engage in a range of activities as part of the ramp-up process. The expected impact – both in terms of securing new funded projects and contributing to the scientific community – should be assessed considering the actual time available during the first years of the new curriculum.

3.3 § 17 para. 4 subpara. 1-2, 4-7: Staff

1. At all sites at which studies are offered in accordance with the development plan
 - a. sufficient scientific or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff, respectively, has been planned for the degree programme,
 - b. the staff members are subject-specifically as well as didactically qualified according to the requirements of the respective post.

The private university college makes sure that at least 50 per cent of the volume of teaching is covered by permanent scientific or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff, respectively. Permanent teaching and research staff means employees working at least 50 per cent of their working hours (usually at least 20 hours per week) in permanent employment at the private university college.

Based on the written application, the discussions conducted during the site-visit, and the supplementary documents provided after the site-visit, in the opinion of the experts, it must be concluded that a sufficient number of qualified academic staff is not yet in place to implement the planned degree programme with both planned tracks.

The staffing plan for permanent faculty positions appears conceptually appropriate, particularly for the AI track. This is supported by the appointment of the Head of Department, [REDACTED], and the planned recruitment of an assistant and an associate professor with expertise in AI. However, at the time of evaluation, only [REDACTED] qualifications can be positively assessed, as no other appointments have been made. According to the plan, the three permanent professors would carry an average teaching load of two to three courses per semester.

In contrast, the Cybersecurity track is significantly less developed. Only one associate professor is scheduled for appointment in September 2029. As of now, WVPU has no academic staff assigned to this track. Given that the first faculty member is not expected to be hired until September 2029, neither the adequacy nor the qualifications of the permanent teaching staff can be evaluated at this point.

The expert panel considers the criterion **not to be met**.

2. The subject-specific core competences representing the most important subjects of the degree programme and thus the main competences to be acquired are covered by
 - a. permanent professors corresponding to at least one full-time equivalent as well as
 - b. other permanent scientific and/or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff corresponding to at least one full-time equivalent.

The private university college or private university shall attach CVs for existing permanently employed teaching and research staff employed to the application for programme accreditation. Furthermore, proof of this staff's extent of employment and their teaching load shall be provided.

For permanent teaching and research staff still to be recruited, the application for programme accreditation shall be supplemented by job descriptions, stating, at least the respective post, the envisaged extent of employment, the teaching load as well as a date for the appointment.

The degree programme will be managed and led by a full-time employed professor with a strong research background in AI. The core competencies of the programme are not fully covered by permanently employed professors: the staff for the Cybersecurity track is not in place and is planned to be available in September 2029 at the earliest. The hiring strategy, which involves building a research group comprising several professors, is both credible and convincing for the field of AI.

The proposed third-party funded personnel (PhD students and postdoctoral researchers) appropriately complement the permanent and external faculty. However, the number of permanent academic staff dedicated to the Cybersecurity track is insufficient.

The expert panel considers this criterion **not to be met**.

4. The composition of the adjunct and permanent teaching and research staff shall ensure a student-teacher ratio appropriate to the profile of the degree programme.

In relation to the anticipated number of students, the final foreseen ratio between adjunct and permanent teaching and research staff for the new department, as outlined in the hiring strategy of the written application, will be appropriate and aligned with the profile of the degree programme. WVPU states that there will be 32 (10 in the beginning) to a maximum of 80 students enrolled at the same time. Given that there will be four professors and two staff (as per the latest report of WVPU after the site-visit), the ratio will be appropriate.

However, as discussed in § 17 (3) subpara. 2, the current staffing does not allow this criterion to be met regarding the Cybersecurity emphasis track.

The expert panel considers this criterion **not to be met**.

5. Adequate measures are planned for the integration of adjunct teaching staff into the organisation of teaching and into programme organisation for the degree programme.

The specified measures for the integration of adjunct teaching staff into the organisation of teaching are clearly articulated and demonstrate a high degree of credibility.

In the written application, WVPU demonstrates that there are clear rules at WVPU with respect to the Senate's Role in the Appointment of Adjunct Faculty, Lecturers, and Visiting Professors Policy. For example, adjunct faculty members holds one of five seats in the Senate, guaranteeing programme oversight.

The written application also describes the co-organization approach toward creating the new Computer Science programme jointly. Furthermore, "[a]djunct faculty have open access to all of its infrastructure and resources including a dedicated office space for their shared use, access to all resources provided by Webster University worldwide as well as access to all of its development and mobility programs." Finally, the application states that "[t]he adjunct faculty

selected by the new Computer Science department chair will be supported to participate in all department planning meetings and related internal events [...].

The expert panel considers this criterion **to be met**.

6. The private university college shall allow for an appropriate balance of teaching, research, and administrative activities of the permanent scientific or scientific-artistic staff to ensure adequate participation in teaching but also leaving sufficient time for research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts.

The distribution of teaching, research, and academic responsibilities among the permanent academic staff is well-balanced and appropriate.

As stated in the written application, "[d]uring normal teaching periods (September through December and February through May), a professor will carry a typical teaching workload of 3 courses per semester and will commit Application for Program Accreditation: BSc in Computer Science approximately 20 hours per week with their teaching and student supervision workload before any reductions granted due to ongoing externally funded grants or administrative duties. This leaves approximately 50% of their time available for research and academic service functions such as supervising theses, providing supplementary guidance to students in the Quant Center, or chairing graduate thesis defenses."

On the long run, this allows, in the opinion of the expert panel, an appropriate balance of teaching, research, and administrative activities for the permanent scientific staff, ensuring adequate participation in teaching while also leaving sufficient time for research and development. However, as mentioned in § 17 (3) subpara. 2, the realization during the ramp-up phase after the start of the programme is seen critically by the expert group.

The expert panel considers this criterion **to be met**.

7. Sufficient non-academic staff has been planned for the degree programme.

The support provided by the non-academic staff at WVPU is excellent and highly appropriate for the effective implementation of the planned degree programme.

As described in the written application, various staff are employed to support the degree programme, e.g., librarians, tutors, system administrators, and staff in the Language Center. When visiting the WVPU during the site-visit, the head librarian demonstrated extraordinary commitment and activism for the students.

The expert panel considers this criterion **to be met**.

3.4 § 17 para. 5: Funding

The degree programme's funding

1. is secured for a period of six years and
2. makes it possible that students complete their degree programme even in the event of its discontinuation.

The financial plan for the degree programme comprises a realistic and plausible balance of all expected revenues and expenses in connection with the planned degree programme.

Financing commitments of all funding bodies listed in the financial plan shall be attached to the application.

The written application includes a detailed and comprehensive financial plan covering the next six years. It outlines secured funding sources, including tuition fees, WVPU's core funding, and additional initial investments – particularly in the private university's server infrastructure. To the experts, the financial plan presents a realistic and plausible projection of anticipated revenues and expenditures, with particular emphasis on the requirements of the AI track. For the CS track, additional specialized laboratory infrastructure will be necessary. Although not explicitly stated in the documentation, the expert panel gained confidence – especially through discussions during the site-visit – that the necessary financial resources are secured.

The financial plan also ensures that students will be able to complete their studies even in the event of programme discontinuation.

The expert panel considers the criterion **to be met**.

Recommendation:

- As a recommendation, a formal risk assessment accompanied by appropriate mitigation measures should be implemented on regular basis.

3.5 § 17 para. 6: Infrastructure

Quantitatively and qualitatively adequate facilities and equipment are provided for the degree programme at all sites at which teaching will be offered. In the case that external resources are required for the degree programme, their right of disposal has been secured and the key points thereof shall be described in the application for programme accreditation.

According to the written application, the private university includes 18 classrooms equipped with various technical facilities, a Mac computer lab, a university library, an atrium serving as a general lounge area, and four student lounges. It also offers quiet study areas and over 120 student lockers. Currently, the classrooms operate at approximately 73% capacity, leaving about 27% available.

Since the existing computer infrastructure is insufficient for the new Computer Science programme, additional infrastructure is planned, including a powerful Graphics Processing Unit-cluster to support modern AI and Machine Learning labs. Furthermore, the private university has allocated sufficient funds to provide each Computer Science student with a preconfigured laptop tailored to the programme's requirements and to secure licenses or access to the necessary software. Additional budget has also been set aside for IT services to ensure the successful setup and operation of the new infrastructure.

Students will have access to various online labs and e-courseware provided by the International Council of Electronic Commerce Consultants (EC-Council) through a partnership with WVPU's parent university. Additionally, the Webster US branch in St. Louis has committed to granting WVPU students access to their infrastructure and supporting efforts to upgrade hardware standards.

The expert group considers this criterion **to be partially met under condition**.

Condition: Within two years of notification of the decision, the institution must ensure that, in addition to procuring personal hardware and software and enabling access to remote servers in the Webster network, appropriate arrangements are made to guarantee access to a state-of-the-art infrastructure necessary for teaching and research in Machine Learning and AI. While the specific investments may depend on the details of the research program still to be defined, a review of the acquired solution and an operational concept must be conducted. This review should confirm that the required infrastructure — whether an on-premise cluster, a shared infrastructure within the Webster network, or a public cloud provider — has been effectively implemented and made available.

3.6 § 17 para. 7: Co-operation

Co-operation projects with other higher education institutions and, if applicable, partnerships with institutions outside the higher education area in Austria and abroad that match the degree programme's profile are provided for. The mobility of students and staff is being promoted.

The degree programme has or is planning to have cooperations with several higher education institutions (Technische Universität Graz, Johann Kepler Universität Linz, SBA Research) both within Austria and internationally (within the Webster network, e.g. Cybersecurity Academic Advisory Council or International Council of Electronic Commerce Consultants), with a clear thematic alignment on cybersecurity. However, for AI no specific partners are mentioned.

Student and staff mobility is also supported through Erasmus+ and the Webster network.

The experts consider the criterion **to be partially met under condition**.

Condition: Within two years of notification of the decision, the institution extends the cooperation network towards partners for the AI emphasis track. That is, WVPU should add a list of relevant partners (beyond the partners already mentioned), how the relation to them is established methodologically and which new partners were successfully onboarded (e.g., with a letter of interest or support).

4 Summary and final evaluation

(2) Degree programme and degree programme management

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 1: The introduction of the Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science aligns with Webster Vienna Private University strategic goals, fosters synergies, and enhances the existing educational offerings in a coherent and integrated manner. Adding a science, technology, engineering and mathematics programme to WVPU's more social science orientated study portfolio, aims at helping broaden the student base and engagement in interdisciplinary exchange. The humanistic profile of the private university should be extended towards more data-driven, analytic subjects that can complement the social science orientation of the private university (political science, international relations) due to the importance of technical advancements and the mission of the European Union to foster this type of skillset. Consequently, in the experts' opinion, the introduction of the new Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science is oriented towards the profile and strategic objectives of WVPU. The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 2: The Bachelor's degree programme in Computer Science is planned with two specialization tracks: cybersecurity (CYS) and artificial intelligence (AI). The programme does comprise of discipline-specific-scientific as well as personal and social skills (b).

The AI track is characterized by three aspects: 1) Fundamental aspects of Artificial Intelligence and the potential benefits to companies and organizations; 2) Utilize a programming language to manage Machine Learning techniques and 3) Develop Machine Learning techniques and algorithms to resolve Artificial Intelligence problems in different areas of industry

The Cybersecurity track is defined as follows: 1) Demonstrate an understanding of the vocabulary of cybersecurity concepts, terms and phraseology: 2) Demonstrate a working knowledge of cybersecurity threats to and defenses of IT systems and 3) Explain the roles, responsibilities and tools of a cybersecurity professional.

Consequently, the programme does comply with the requirements of Computer Science and AI in general as aspired professional fields of activities (c) as well as with qualification level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework (d).

The experts see this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 3: The name and the academic degree - Bachelor of Science in Computer Science – corresponds to the profile of the planned degree programme and its tracks. The expert panel considers the criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 4: Generally, the experts consider the degree programme to be well planned, however there is a major difference in the specialisation tracks.

Considering the scientific and didactic requirements, the expert panel sees this aspect as given for the AI track but not the Cybersecurity track. The reasoning lies in the missing staff and precise planning concerning the cybersecurity track, as stated in the preliminary remarks.

The expert panel considers acquiring of the core contents as given for both tracks, because a complementary selection of general, computer science-specific, and in-depth courses ensures the learning outcomes.

The expert panel considers achieving the intended learning outcomes by the planned content and structure as met for both tracks. The forms of study and learning are also structured accordingly. The various teaching formats ensure both the integration of science and practice via the practical semester and the encouragement of active participation.

The expert panel considers the courses and exams as suitable for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the study programme and gives detailed recommendations for both tracks.

The expert panel considers the connection of research and teaching as not secured, as an active involvement of the research staff in the courses as well as offering research insights in the courses, will cover this aspect only once the full teaching body is onboarded. Currently, the foreseen teaching body can only cover the AI aspects.

The expert panel considers the active involvement of students in the learning process as given.

Overall, the expert panel considers this criterion **not to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 5: The planned degree programme has a standard period of study of 4 years and consists of a total of 240 ECTS credits. The workload sums up to approximately 30 ECTS per semester and is balanced, making it possible that the intended learning outcomes are achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. Each course has a clear number of ECTS credits assigned, based on a standard workload of 25 hours per credit, ensuring that learning outcomes are achievable within the expected timeframe. ECTS credits are also appropriately allocated to internships, project work, and the final thesis. The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 6: The Diploma Supplement follows the official EU/CoE/UNESCO template and is to be published in German and English. The supplement provides a programme-specific overview that supports both academic and professional recognition in Austria and internationally. It includes detailed information on the awarded qualification, the grading system, and the degree's context within the Austrian higher education framework. The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 7: The admission requirements for the planned degree programme are clearly laid out and include appropriate general educational qualifications, such as a secondary school exit exam certificate, a recommendation letter and English language certificates, as well as additional degree-specific criteria like minimum grades in mathematics or extracurricular activities. These requirements are generally aligned with the programme's qualification objectives. The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 8: The admission procedure to the degree programme is clearly defined, transparent, and merit-based. It is overseen by an Admissions Committee, whose decisions are communicated to applicants on fixed dates, and decisions are made based on mathematical performance, IT skills, and relevant prior experience of the applicants. Interviews are conducted only on a request basis. When applications exceed available places, a waiting list is created based on the rankings, ensuring a fair selection process. The expert group considers this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 2 subpara. 9: Procedures for the recognition of formal competences are in place and clearly documented. The criteria used are transparent, accessible to students, and based on objective standards aligned with learning outcomes. Credit transfer mechanisms are implemented in accordance with the ECTS framework, and information on recognition is publicly available. The programme actively supports student and staff mobility and maintains established cooperation projects with both national and international higher education institutions. Procedures for mobility, including recognition of credits from partner institutions, are formally documented to ensure transparency and comparability.

While a process for the recognition of non-formally acquired learning is provided, the current implementation only partially meets these criteria. This type of recognition is described but lacks clear formal documentation or publication, limiting transparency in the expert panel's view. A review of the clarification must be conducted within two years. This review should confirm that the criteria for evaluation have been effectively implemented and made available. The expert panel considers the criterion **to be partially met under condition**.

Condition: Within two years of notification of the decision, the applicant institution conducts a review and clarification of the criteria for the recognition of non-formally acquired competences within two years. This review should confirm that the criteria for evaluation have been effectively implemented and made available for the students.

(3) Research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts

§ 17 para. 3 subpara. 1: In its written application, WVPU has only outlined a preliminary research program in the field of Artificial Intelligence since, at the time of writing this report, only the head of the department was appointed. Consequently, while the research program in Artificial Intelligence can be evaluated, no comparable details are available for Cybersecurity. Therefore, this criterion as well cannot be sufficiently met concerning Cybersecurity.

However, [REDACTED] a distinguished expert in Artificial Intelligence, is in the process of transferring to WVPU as a permanent staff member of the newly established department and has already defined a preliminary research program. During the first three years, the research will focus on various deep learning topics, covering both fundamental and applied computer science. Since WVPU is new to the field of Computer Science and the department is still being established, there is no existing track record in this area. However, [REDACTED] is already in the process of initiating three nationally funded research projects through his academic network, which should provide the necessary momentum to launch the research program at the new department of the WVPU. In the expert panel's opinion, sufficient subject-specific research activities, in compliance with the scientific standards of the discipline - i.e., for the field of Artificial Intelligence - have been planned for the degree programme. Due to the lack of a substantial research programme in cyber security, the experts consider the criterion **not to be met**.

§ 17 para. 3 subpara. 2: According to the written application, for full and associate professors, research should be a central task according to their job profiles. A substantial amount of time for research is reserved in the budget calculations. In particular, WVPU reserves for its permanent research and teaching staff roughly a third of the time for teaching and two-thirds of the paid time for research.

Given that WVPU intends to hire only two faculty members in the first year (of which only one was hired by the time of the site-visit), it is questionable for the expert panel, whether these

assumptions are reasonable, given that courses need to be prepared outside the classroom and also administrative tasks need to be carried out. In the first years, it also opens the considerable risk that an unplanned departure of a faculty member might cause major disruptions in the curriculum. WVPU believes that such disruptions are mitigable through faculty exchanges from other Webster Network campuses. However, no formal agreement appears to be in place at present. Nevertheless, it indicates in expert panels' opinion that WVPU does indeed plan that their staff substantially participates in research activities. Staff are further supposed to work in funded research projects. The integration of research into teaching seems credible, since the personnel giving the lectures are also supposed to spend time on research activities.

The involvement of students in research and development activities is given by the opportunity to carry out their practicums and bachelor theses as part of R&D projects at WVPU. While it is noteworthy that research will have to be built up from the scratch, according to the site-visit, WVPU is committed to investing the required time. The first personnel hired will have two years to build up a research area so that students in their third year can then be involved during their practicums. Due to the existing studies in business and finance at WVPU, the expert panel assesses that interdisciplinarity is realistically possible too, especially focusing on machine learning and AI, where first collaboration opportunities have already been identified (e.g., in the area of business analytics). The experts consider the criterion **to be met**.

(4) Staff

§ 17 para. 4 subparagraph. 1: The staffing plan for permanent faculty positions appears conceptually appropriate, particularly for the Artificial Intelligence track. This is supported by the appointment of the Head of Department, [REDACTED], and the planned recruitment of an assistant and an associate professor with expertise in AI. However, at the time of evaluation, only [REDACTED] qualifications can be positively assessed, as no other appointments have been made. According to the plan, the three permanent professors would carry an average teaching load of two to three courses per semester.

In contrast, the Cybersecurity track is significantly less developed. Only one associate professor is scheduled for appointment in September 2029. As of now, WVPU has no academic staff assigned to this track. Given that the first faculty member is not expected to be hired until September 2029, neither the adequacy nor the qualifications of the permanent teaching staff can be evaluated at this point. The expert panel considers the criterion **not to be met**.

§ 17 para. 4 subparagraph. 4: In relation to the anticipated number of students, the final foreseen ratio between adjunct and permanent teaching and research staff for the new department, as outlined in the hiring strategy of the written application, will be appropriate and aligned with the profile of the degree programme. WVPU states that there will be 32 (10 in the beginning) to a maximum of 80 students enrolled at the same time. Given that there will be 4 professors and 2 staff (as per the latest report of WVPU after the site-visit), the ratio will be appropriate. However, as discussed in § 17 (3) subparagraph. 2, the current staffing does not allow this criterion to be met regarding the Cybersecurity specialisation track. The expert panel considers this criterion **not to be met**.

§ 17 para. 4 subparagraph. 5: The specified measures for the integration of adjunct teaching staff into the organisation of teaching are clearly articulated and demonstrate a high degree of credibility. There are clear rules at WVPU with respect to the Senate's Role in the Appointment of Adjunct Faculty, Lecturers, and Visiting Professors Policy. For example, adjunct faculty holds

one of five seats in the Senate, guaranteeing programme oversight. The expert panel considers this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 4 subpara. 6: The distribution of teaching, research, and academic responsibilities among the permanent academic staff is well-balanced and appropriate. On the long run, the distribution model of WVPU allows, in expert panel's opinion, an appropriate balance of teaching, research, and administrative activities for the permanent scientific staff, ensuring adequate participation in teaching while also leaving sufficient time for research and development. However, as mentioned in § 17 (3) subpara. 2, the realisation in the ramp-up phase is seen critically by the expert group. The expert panel considers this criterion **to be met**.

§ 17 para. 4 subpara. 7: The support provided by the non-academic staff is excellent and highly appropriate for the effective implementation of the planned degree programme. The expert panel considers this criterion **to be met**.

(5) Funding

The written application includes a detailed and comprehensive financial plan covering the next six years. It outlines secured funding sources, including tuition fees, WVPU's core funding, and additional initial investments—particularly in the private university's server infrastructure. The financial plan presents a realistic and plausible projection of anticipated revenues and expenditures, with particular emphasis on the requirements of the Artificial Intelligence track. For the Cybersecurity track, additional specialized laboratory infrastructure will be necessary. Although not explicitly stated in the documentation, the expert panel gained confidence—especially through discussions during the site-visit—that the necessary financial resources are secured. The financial plan also ensures that students will be able to complete their studies even in the event of programme discontinuation. The expert panel considers the criterion **to be met**.

(6) Infrastructure

In general, the private university has a sufficient infrastructure. Currently, the classrooms operate at approximately 73% capacity, leaving about 27% available. However, since the existing computer infrastructure is insufficient for the new Computer Science programme, additional infrastructure is planned, including a powerful Graphics Processing Unit-cluster to support modern AI and Machine Learning labs. Furthermore, the private university has allocated sufficient funds to provide each Computer Science student with a preconfigured laptop tailored to the programme's requirements and to secure licenses or access to the necessary software. Additional budget has also been set aside for IT services to ensure the successful setup and operation of the new infrastructure. The expert group considers this criterion **to be partially met under condition**.

Condition: Within two years of notification of the decision, the institution must ensure that, in addition to procuring personal hardware and software and enabling access to remote servers in the Webster network, appropriate arrangements are made to guarantee access to a state-of-the-art infrastructure necessary for teaching and research in Machine Learning and AI. While the specific investments may depend on the details of the research program still to be defined, a review of the acquired solution and an operational concept must be conducted. This review should confirm that the required infrastructure — whether an on-premise cluster, a shared

infrastructure within the Webster network, or a public cloud provider — has been effectively implemented and made available.

(7) Co-operation

The degree programme has or is planning to have cooperations with several higher education institutions (Technische Universität Graz, Johann Kepler Universität Linz, SBA Research) both within Austria and internationally (within the Webster network, e.g. Cybersecurity Academic Advisory Council or International Council of Electronic Commerce Consultants), with a clear thematic alignment on cybersecurity. However, for AI no specific partners are mentioned. Student as well as staff mobility is also supported through Erasmus+ and the Webster network. The experts consider the criterion **to be partially met under condition**.

Condition: Within two years of notification of the decision the institution extends the co-operations network towards partners for the AI specialisation track. That is, WVPU should add a list of relevant partners (beyond the partners already mentioned), how the relation to them is established methodologically and which new partners were successfully onboarded (e.g., with a letter of interest or support) within the first two years after the start of the programme.

The experts, at the moment **do not recommend** to the board of AQ Austria the accreditation of the Bachelor programme "Computer Science", conducted in Vienna by Bildungsverein für die Freunde der Webster University (St. Louis, USA), due to the critical issues caused by the Cybersecurity emphasis track.

5 Viewed documents

- Application for accreditation of the Bachelor programme "Computer Science", conducted in Vienna, by the Bildungsverein für die Freunde der Webster University (St. Louis, USA) received on 08.05.2024 in the version of November 2024.
- Subsequent documents submitted prior to the site-visit, received on 04.03.2025:
 - Updated research outline; Updated information on personnel as well as on infrastructure
- Subsequent documents submitted after the site-visit, received on 19.03.2025:
 - Gender Equality Plan 2024; Updated Syllabus; Roadmap for staff hiring; Milestones in the development of the study programme; List of planned infrastructure to be purchased

An das Board der Agentur für
Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria
Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
1190 Wien

03.06.2025

Subject: Comments on Expert Report for Accreditation Application – Bachelor Programme
"Computer Science" (Webster Vienna Private University)

Dear Members of the AQ Austria Board,

Thank you for forwarding the expert report dated 25.05.2025, regarding our accreditation application for the Bachelor Programme in Computer Science at Webster Vienna Private University (WVPU). As always, we remain committed to ensuring successful compliance with AQ Austria's rigorous standards.

We appreciate the thorough and professional manner in which the expert panel conducted the assessment. In particular, we both acknowledge and accept the experts' recommendation explicitly stated on page 4 and reiterated on pages 7 and 19, **to postpone the introduction of the Cybersecurity** emphasis track until such time as WVPU has sufficiently built up the staffing and infrastructure necessary to support this specialization fully. We value the experts' fairness and candour in stating that if we were to do so, their "assessment would change" (page 4) and that they "**would recommend the accreditation of the Computer Science programme with an AI focus to the Board of AQ Austria**" (page 4). We concur with the panel's conclusion that introducing the Bachelor programme initially focused solely on Artificial Intelligence (AI) is strategically prudent and aligns with WVPU's current capabilities and institutional strategy allowing us the necessary establishment and development space. Therefore, if approved by the AQ Austria Board, **we will introduce the Computer Science program with only one emphasis track (AI)**.

We would like to thank the experts for commending the program's strategic alignment with WVPU's profile and goals (p. 5), the clarity of our definition of the AI track's intended learning outcomes (p. 6), the positive notes on staffing, particularly with the hiring of [REDACTED] (p. 4), and infrastructure plans (pp. 17-18).

In accordance with your request and pursuant to Section 8 of the Private Higher Education Accreditation Ordinance 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO), we have identified two factual inaccuracies or misunderstandings in the report.

On page 3 in the last paragraph beginning with "In 2022", the experts state "Nevertheless, the Board of AQ Austria concluded that serious shortcomings persisted and decided not to admit accreditation." However, the Board of AQ Austria never made any such conclusion as WVPU withdrew its application before it was submitted to the Board. We respectfully request that this sentence be corrected to accurately reflect the facts.

On page 18, at the end of the paragraph beginning with "The degree programme has", the experts conclude regarding the partially met condition §17 para. 7 : Cooperation, "However, for AI no specific partners are mentioned". Perhaps overlooked, we provided such a set of potential partners on 04.03.2025 in an email with the subject "RE: AQ Austria: Adapted Programme for the Site Visit: BA

Computer Science". In the updated section *New Infrastructure Needed to Support the New Program* we specifically mentioned *the Austrian Computer Society, IEEE Austria, TU Wien, TU Graz, Uni Wien, FH Joanneum, FH Hagenberg, Joanneum Research, and Austrian Institute of Technology, and Software Competence Center Hagenberg* as potential partners in the field of artificial intelligence.

In addition, it is important to highlight that the new department will be strongly integrated into both national and international Artificial Intelligence communities. [REDACTED] actively participates in and contributes to key AI networks, notably as the leader of the "Artificial Intelligence" working group within the Austrian Computer Society (OCG) and co-founder of the AIRoV (Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Vision) initiative, which hosts annual symposia connecting leading AI researchers. He also serves as president of the Austrian Association of Pattern Recognition (OAGM). [REDACTED] maintains active research and teaching collaborations specifically focused on AI with prominent Austrian universities including TU Graz (where he holds the venia legendi for Computer Science), TU Vienna, Medical University of Graz, Vetmeduni, BOKU University, FH Joanneum, Software Competence Center Hagenberg, and FH Hagenberg, with emerging international partnerships involving institutions in Switzerland, Germany, and the UK. [REDACTED] network establishes a solid foundation for extending cooperation with external institutions, especially in the field of Artificial Intelligence.

When reading the experts' report, one might gain the impression that the programme is primarily or extensively specialized in Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity. However, this programme is fundamentally designed as a general Computer Science degree, supplemented by introductory emphases (approximately one semester's worth of training) intended to spark student interest and facilitate further specialized studies. Conversely, the experts explicitly recognize and affirm the foundational strength and coherence of the broader Computer Science programme as intended (see pages 5, 6, 8, 20, and 24). While we remain committed to offering specializations now (AI) and potentially in the future (e.g., Cybersecurity, Data Science), the programme fundamentally remains a general bachelor's degree in computer science.

We confirm our commitment to diligently implement the recommendations detailed in the expert report, particularly regarding infrastructure enhancements (such as GPU clusters), curriculum updates, staff recruitment strategies, and recognition processes for non-formal learning. In alignment with the conditions explicitly set by the expert panel, we intend to complete and document these improvements within the prescribed two-year timeframe, leveraging our existing internal quality management processes to ensure timely progress and comprehensive reporting.

Recognizing that both the report and our comments will be taken into account by the AQ Austria Board in its accreditation decision, we look forward to the Board's positive assessment thereby allowing Webster Vienna Private University to take an important step in meeting its strategic goal of introducing a STEM program.

Thank you once again for the valuable insights provided by the external reviewers, which undoubtedly contribute to enhancing the quality and academic excellence of our proposed bachelor degree programme in Computer Science. Please let us know if further clarification is required.

