AQ Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria

Ergebnisbericht zum Verfahren zum Antrag auf Akkreditierung des Doktoratsstudiengangs „Precision and Personalized Medicine" der Danube Private University GmbH, durchgeführt in Wiener Neustadt

1 Antragsgegenstand

Die Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria (AQ Austria) führte ein Akkreditierungsverfahren zu oben genanntem Antrag gemäß § 24 Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz (HS-QSG), BGBl I Nr. 74/2011 idF BGBl I Nr. 50/2024, iVm § 2 Privathochschulgesetz (PrivHG), BGBl I Nr. 77/2020 idF BGBl I Nr. 50/2024, sowie § 18 Privathochschul-Akkreditierungsverordnung 2021 (PrivH-AkkVO 2021) durch. Gemäß § 21 HS-QSG veröffentlicht die AQ Austria folgenden Ergebnisbericht:

2 Verfahrensablauf

Das Akkreditierungsverfahren umfasste folgende Verfahrensschritte:

Verfahrensschritt	Zeitpunkt
Antrag	Version vom 13.12.2024, eingelangt am 13.12.2024

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

Mitteilung an Antragstellerin: Prüfung des Antrags durch die Geschäftsstelle	07.02.2025
Überarbeiteter Antrag	Version vom 28.02.2025, eingelangt am 28.02.2025
Mitteilung an Antragstellerin: Abschluss der Antragsprüfung mit Hinweisen zur Adaptierung des Antrags	11.03.2025
Überarbeiteter Antrag	Version vom 21.03.2025, eingelangt am 21.03.2025
Bestellung der Gutachter*innen und Beschluss über Vorgangsweise des Verfahrens	09.04.2025
Information an Antragstellerin über Gutachter*innen	10.04.2025
Virtuelles Vorbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter*innen	29.04.2025 06.05.2025
Vorbereitungstreffen mit Gutachter*innen	21.05.2025
Vor-Ort-Besuch	22.05.2025
Nachreichungen nach dem Vor-Ort-Besuch eingelangt am	02.06.2025 09.06.2025
Virtuelles Nachbereitungsgespräch mit Gutachter*innen	12.06.2025
Vorlage des Gutachtens	12.07.2025
Übermittlung des Gutachtens an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	14.07.2025
Übermittlung der Kostenaufstellung an Antragstellerin zur Stellungnahme	14.07.2025
Verzicht der Antragstellerin auf Stellungnahme zur Kostenaufstellung eingelangt am	15.07.2025
Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin zum Gutachten eingelangt am	18.07.2025
Stellungnahme der Antragstellerin zum Gutachten an Gutachter*innen	05.08.2025

3 Akkreditierungsentscheidung

Das Board der AQ Austria hat mit Beschluss vom 17.09.2025 entschieden, dem Antrag der Danube Private University GmbH auf Akkreditierung des Doktoratsstudiengangs „Precision and Personalized Medicine" unter Auflagen stattzugeben, da die Akkreditierungsvoraussetzungen gemäß § 24 HS-QSG iVm § 2 PrivHG iVm § 18 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 nicht vollständig erfüllt sind.

Die folgenden Kriterien sind erfüllt:

- § 18 Abs. 1 Z 1 und 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Entwicklung und Qualitätssicherung des Doktoratsstudiengangs)
- § 18 Abs. 2 Z 1 bis 4 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Forschungsumfeld)
- § 18 Abs. 3 Z 1 bis 5 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Betreuung und Beratungsangebote)
- § 18 Abs. 4 Z 5 und 9 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Studiengang und Studiengangsmanagement)
- § 18 Abs. 5 Z 1 bis 3 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Personal)
- § 18 Abs. 6 Z 1 und 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Finanzierung)

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

Die folgenden Kriterien sind eingeschränkt erfüllt:

- § 18 Abs. 2 Z 5 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Forschungsumfeld)
- § 18 Abs. 4 Z 1 bis 4 und 6 bis 8 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 (Studiengang und Studiengangsmanagement)

Die Programmakkreditierung erfolgt gemäß § 24 Abs. 9a HS-QSG unter folgenden Auflagen:

1. Gemäß § 18 Abs. 2 Z 5 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 6 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass der Zugang zu für die geplante Forschung adäquater Recheninfrastruktur sichergestellt ist. Falls sich die Privatuniversität externer Ressourcen bedient, ist nachzuweisen, dass ihre Verfügungsberechtigung darüber sichergestellt ist.
2. Gemäß § 18 Abs. 4 Z 1, 3 und 6 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 6 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass das Profil und die intendierten Lernergebnisse den Anforderungen der angestrebten beruflichen Tätigkeitsfelder sowie Stufe 8 des Nationalen Qualifikationsrahmens entsprechen. Weiters ist nachzuweisen, dass die intendierten Lernergebnisse mit dem Studienplan (ohne Berücksichtigung außercurricularer Veranstaltungen, für die keine ECTS-Anrechnungspunkte vorgesehen sind) in Einklang gebracht wurden und das Profil und die intendierten Lernergebnisse in den relevanten programmspezifischen Dokumenten (Promotionsordnung, Diploma Supplement, Richtlinien zur Umsetzung) konsistent definiert sind.
3. Gemäß § 18 Abs. 4 Z 2 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 6 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass das Profil des Studiengangs so adaptiert wurde, dass es der Studiengangsbezeichnung (Precision and Personalized Medicine) und dem akademischen Grad (Doctor of Philosophy, PhD) entspricht.
4. Gemäß § 18 Abs. 4 Z 4 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 6 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass die Anforderungen an das Research Proposal (inkl. Inhalten und Einreichungsfrist) und an die für die Dissertation erforderlichen Publikationen so definiert sind, dass die Dissertation innerhalb der vorgesehenen Studiendauer abgeschlossen werden kann.
5. Gemäß § 18 Abs. 4 Z 7 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 6 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass festgelegt wurde, wer im Falle eines nicht-forschungsorientierten Masterabschlusses für die Entscheidung über zusätzliche Voraussetzungen verantwortlich ist, und dass etwaige zusätzliche programmspezifische Anforderungen klar festgelegt sind.
6. Gemäß § 18 Abs. 4 Z 8 PrivH-AkkVO 2021 ist binnen 6 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids nachzuweisen, dass die Kriterien für die Aufnahme als Studierende*r vollständig in der Promotionsordnung aufgenommen wurden.

Das Board der AQ Austria hat über die Vorschläge der Gutachter*innengruppe zu Auflagen beraten und sah keinen Anlass, von der durch die Gutachter*innengruppe formulierten abschließenden Gesamtbewertung zur Akkreditierung des Studiengangs unter Auflagen abzuweichen. Jedoch wurde eine Empfehlung der Gutachter*innen bezüglich des Nachweises von Kooperationen für Recheninfrastruktur für die geplante Forschung auf Grund von Kriterium § 18 Abs. 2 Z 5 PrivH-AkkVO 2021, das versieht, dass die Verfügungsberechtigung sicherzustellen ist, falls sich die Privatuniversität externer Ressourcen bedient, zu einer Auflage geändert. Weiters wurde eine von den Gutachter*innen vorgeschlagene optionale Auflage zur Sicherung der Finanzierung im Falle der Ausdehnung der regulären Studiendauer und damit zusammenhängend Teile von zwei weiteren Auflagen auf Grund der Klarstellung in der

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

Stellungnahme als nicht mehr relevant eingestuft. Darüber hinaus wurden die von den Gutachter*innen vorgeschlagenen Auflagen adaptiert bzw. präzisiert und inhaltlich zusammenhängende Auflagen zu einer Auflage zusammengefasst.

Die im Gutachten vorgeschlagene Frist für die Erbringung der Nachweise bis zum Start des Doktoratsstudiengangs wurde vom Board der AQ Austria nicht übernommen, da sie ihrem Inhalt nach eine Bedingung darstellen würde. Das HS-QSG sieht jedoch die Verknüpfung einer Akkreditierung mit Bedingungen nicht vor, sondern ausschließlich mit Auflagen. Im Sinne des Gutachtens wurde die gemäß der bisherigen Praxis des Boards der AQ Austria kürzeste Frist von 6 Monaten ab Zustellung des Bescheids für alle Auflagen festgelegt.

Daher unterscheiden sich die aufgelisteten Auflagen im Ergebnisbericht von jenen, welche im Gutachten vom 12.07.2025, das diesem Ergebnisbericht angeschlossenen ist, dargelegt sind.

Die Entscheidung wurde am 29.09.2025 von der*vom zuständigen Bundesminister*in genehmigt. Der Bescheid wurde mit Datum vom 02.10.2025 zugestellt.

4 Anlagen

- Gutachten vom 12.07.2025
- Stellungnahme vom 18.07.2025

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

AQ Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5

Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria

Expert report on the accreditation procedure for the doctoral programme Precision and Personalized Medicine, conducted in Wiener Neustadt by the Danube Private University GmbH

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

Vienna, 12.07.2025

Table of contents

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

1 Overview of the accreditation procedure

Information on the applicant institution	
Applicant institution	Danube Private University GmbH
Sites of the higher education institution	Krems, Wiener Neustadt
Legal status	GmbH
Initial institutional accreditation	13.08.2009
Latest extension of institutional accreditation	19.08.2024
Number of students	2,470 (2023/24)
Accredited study programmes	16

Information on the accreditation application	
Programme title	Precision and Personalized Medicine
Type of study programme	Doctoral programme
ECTS credit points	180
Standard duration of studies	6 semesters
Planned number of students per academic year	15
Academic degree	Doctor of Philosophy, short form: PhD
Organisational form	Full-time
Language	English
Site of the study programme	Wiener Neustadt
Tuition fee	EUR 12,000.00 per year

The applicant institution submitted the accreditation application on 13.12.2024. According to the decision of AQ Austria's board on 09.04.2025, the following experts were nominated for this procedure:

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

Name	Function and Institution	Area of competence
Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Daniel Baumgarten	Full Professor for Biomedical Engineering, University of Innsbruck	scientific qualification in the field of biomedical engineering
Prof. Dr.-Ing. habil. Andreas Maier	Chair of Computer Science 5 (Pattern Recognition), Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg	scientific qualification in the field of medical imaging
PD Dr. med. Linus Angenendt	Principal Investigator at the Personalized Cancer Therapy and Digital Medicine Group, University Hospital Münster Visiting Scientist at the Cell Systems Dynamics Group, Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering, ETH Zurich	scientific qualification in the field of precision oncology
Damon Mohebbi, MSc	Student, Digital Health (PhD), University of Oxford Assistant doctor & student (Promotion, Dr. med.), Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf & University Hospital Düsseldorf	experience as a student in the field of digital health

On 22.05.2025 a site visit on the applicant institution's premises took place, at their Wiener Neustadt location.

2 Preliminary remarks

Danube Private University GmbH applied for accreditation of the doctoral programme Precision and Personalized Medicine (PPM) which shall be conducted in Wiener Neustadt. This doctoral programme represents a logical step in the development process of Danube Private University (DPU) and builds on a strong research environment already present. In general, the quality of the application and the enclosed documents did not match the excellent impression the experts obtained during the site visit and the research performance underlying the doctoral programme. Contradictions within the documents and between the site visit and the application were observed. Adaptations in the provided documents were claimed by the experts during the site visit and submitted by DPU accordingly. Most importantly, the document 'Guidelines for Implementation', frequently referred to during the site visit, was only submitted as part of these additional documents.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

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

The accreditation of doctoral programmes is possible only for private university colleges that fulfil the accreditation requirements pursuant to § 4 PrivHG. Moreover, the accreditation of doctoral programmes is possible for private university colleges where pursuant to § 4 para. 4 PrivHG the requirements for the accreditation as a private university are already met at the time of institutional initial accreditation.

3.1 § 18 para. 1 subpara. 1–2: Development and quality assurance of the doctoral programme

1. The degree programme was developed using a predefined procedure for the development and establishment of degree programmes and involving the relevant stakeholder groups.

DPU employs a defined process for curriculum development. Its Quality Assurance Council (QSRH), in cooperation with the Senate, oversees it. They form working groups to ensure curricula meet current requirements and align with the private university's development plan.

This structured approach, supported by the Directorate of Academic Coordination and Management, was evident in the development of the doctoral programme in PPM. Led by an internationally experienced academic, the PPM programme's design involved a comprehensive seven-step process. It incorporated insights from a wide variety of global academic and industry leaders, such as Harvard Medical School, Stanford University, and Roche, ensuring the curriculum's scientific depth, clinical relevance, and entrepreneurial focus.

During the site visit, inquiries into the programme's objectives made it clear that its primary focus is on improving the quality of medical education by integrating science and research, strengthening its research orientation, and adopting a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates AI, omics, and sensors.

The extensive stakeholder involvement, including the strong network of diverse clinical partners and ongoing discussions with pharmaceutical companies such as Boehringer Ingelheim, Roche, and Johnson & Johnson, as well as the engagement with forward-thinking leaders, and the focus on key research areas like medical imaging, AI, and sensor technology were highlighted during the site visit as crucial aspects of the programme's strategic design and future success. Students were involved informally in the curriculum design.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

During the site visit, it became apparent that students, apart from membership in the Senate, were integrated in informal ways and not actively in the working group. For future curriculum design and development, it is recommended to strengthen the formal integration of student voices.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

2. Following its accreditation, the degree programme is incorporated into the private university's quality management system. Using an established process for quality assurance and enhancement and involving the relevant stakeholder groups, the private university ensures ongoing compliance with the accreditation criteria.

Following its accreditation, the doctoral programme in PPM will be fully integrated into the private university's established quality management system, as detailed in its quality assurance manual. This system, managed by the Quality Assurance Council (QSRH), operates on a continuous PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, ensuring ongoing compliance with the accreditation criteria and fostering continuous improvement across studies, teaching, research, and development.

During the site visit, commitment to quality assurance was articulated through various discussions such as the qualification agreement for assistant professors being regularly developed via internal quality assurance measures. Students also highlighted their involvement in quality assurance, noting that they evaluate lectures and assessments and that the private university takes students very seriously and implements good and quick changes based on feedback.

Moreover, the private university established a process for the further development of degree programmes (Quality Assurance Measure 12) which ensures transparent review of five key characteristics, including learning outcomes, curriculum structure, professional requirements, workload, and ECTS application.

Appendix 24 of the application clearly outlines the Doctoral Advisory Board and its composition. It oversees the academic quality and strategic development of the doctoral programme. The board meets regularly, at least twice annually. In addition to the internal quality assurance council, it includes one external expert and a professor from the university clinics. It also includes case-based stakeholders within the framework of the doctoral programme.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

- To further solidify the importance and role of quality assurance for the degree programme, the experts recommend establishing a dedicated quality assurance office with specialised staff.
- Also, the experts recommend incorporating student representatives to the Quality Assurance Council and to the Doctoral Advisory Board.
- Furthermore, the experts recommend integrating the Doctoral Advisory Board into the university-wide quality assurance system, including the quality assurance manual.
- In addition, the criteria in Quality Assurance Measure 12 should be continuously adapted to the current version of the national legal frameworks for quality assurance, given that the Decree on the Accreditation of Private Universities 2019 was mentioned in the quality assurance manual.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

3.2 § 18 para. 2 subpara. 1–5: Research environment

1. According to its profile and objectives, the private university has developed a research concept

a. in which the doctoral programme is embedded and

b. which defines research priorities in the discipline of the doctoral programme.

The private university outlines a research concept embedded within its institutional profile and objectives, which serves as the foundation for the proposed doctoral programme in PPM. According to the application and development plan, the doctoral programme is integrated into the broader research strategy entitled 'Personalized Medicine Enabled by Artificial Intelligence & Intelligent Sensing Systems (PI-SENS)'. This overarching concept defines interdisciplinary research priorities in areas such as data science, medical imaging, biotechnology, AI, sensors, and omics, with a particular emphasis on translational medicine.

DPU has created three dedicated research groups at the Technology and Research Center in Wiener Neustadt – MIAAI (Medical Image Analysis & AI), CAROM (Clinical AI-Research in Omics and Medical Data Science), and LiST (International Laboratory of Life Sciences and Technology). These groups are methodologically rather than thematically oriented, designed to foster interdisciplinary collaboration with clinical departments. Their research activities are connected to the university hospitals, with which DPU has formal employment contracts ensuring continuity between clinical care, teaching, and research.

DPU acknowledges that it is currently in the early phase of implementing this vision and that only the core areas of the concept are presently being addressed. Additional research areas, highlighted as future priorities, such as single-cell analysis, quantum computing, and advanced immunotherapies, are yet to be staffed and developed.

The experts have been able to review a coherent and ambitious research concept that explicitly embeds the doctoral programme and aligns with DPU's institutional objectives. The structure is particularly notable for its interdisciplinary character, bridging engineering, life sciences, and clinical medicine. The embedding of the doctoral programme within DPU's three research clusters and the envisioned integration with clinical departments provide a strong conceptual foundation.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

The experts observe that while the concept is well articulated, its implementation is at an early stage and currently limited to a subset of the defined research areas. The prioritisation of core themes – such as medical imaging, AI, biosensors, and data science – reflects a pragmatic approach in line with available infrastructure and staffing, yet limits the thematic breadth of research opportunities for doctoral candidates at this stage. Moreover, the evolving nature of the research priorities suggests a certain fluidity that could potentially lead to inconsistencies if not carefully managed. From the experts' point of view, the programme demonstrates a commendable commitment to interdisciplinary, translational research and the ambition to develop into a research-intensive institution. Nonetheless, the experts strongly recommend further consolidating and clarifying the prioritisation of thematic research fields in order to

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

strengthen the programme's coherence and ensure alignment between strategic vision and operational capacity.

> 2. The private university can prove that the research priorities and research activities defined for the doctoral programme are in accordance with the academic standards and the respective discipline's standards and guarantee international visibility.

The private university has demonstrated through a substantial number of ongoing and completed research projects as well as high-quality scientific publications that the defined research priorities and activities of the doctoral programme meet academic standards of the discipline and ensure international visibility. The application lists numerous third-party funded projects, including grants from FFG, FWF, and Horizon Europe, indicating broad integration into national and international research consortia. Notably, applied research dominates current research projects. During the on-site discussions, it was confirmed that approximately EUR 50 million in third-party funding have been acquired and 8 PhD positions are currently open. A COMET project 'Personalized Medicine Enabled by Intelligent Sensing Systems – PI-SENS' led by DPU, with a total volume of EUR 4.5 million, further demonstrates the institution's capacity to coordinate competitive large-scale projects.

Furthermore, the private university follows an ambitious publication strategy. The application and supplementary documents list numerous publications in high-impact journals such as Nature Communications, Advanced Materials, Nano Today, and Trends in Biotechnology. These publications stem from researchers already affiliated with DPU as well as those who will join in the near future. This proves not only the scientific quality but also the international visibility of the research. The close alignment of these research outputs with the thematic foci of the doctoral programme – particularly in AI, medical imaging, biosensors, and personalised medicine – underscores the disciplinary relevance of the research activities.

Active participation in international conferences and collaborations with renowned partner institutions such as the University of Cambridge, Technion, and the Vienna BioCenter further contribute to international visibility. Overall, the evidence presented provides a coherent picture of a research-active institution whose research priorities align with current international standards in the field of PPM.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

The experts recommend further emphasising fundamental research that could be demonstrated by additional funding by FWF or ERC, as the current portfolio focusses strongly on applied research.

> 3. Institutionally anchored co-operation projects in research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts which are relevant for the doctoral programme and appropriate for the respective discipline have been provided for.

The private university has provided clear evidence of institutionally anchored cooperation projects in research and development that are relevant to the doctoral programme and appropriate for the discipline. The application describes a well-developed network of national and international partnerships involving universities, clinical institutions, and industry. These

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

collaborations are embedded in multidisciplinary projects that reflect the thematic orientation of the doctoral programme in PPM. The university hospitals in Wiener Neustadt, Neunkirchen, and Hochegg are integrated into DPU's academic and research framework through employment contracts and joint project structures, ensuring strong cooperation between clinical practice and academic research. This link allows for continuous knowledge exchange and collaborative supervision of doctoral students by clinical co-supervisors. Additionally, DPU maintains active partnerships with a wide range of academic institutions, including the University of Cambridge, Technion, University of Ulm, University Clinic Rome, University of Sydney, University of Basel, Charité Berlin, and Medical University Vienna as well as with research organisations such as the Austrian Institute of Technology and the Austrian Center for Medical Innovation and Technology. These partnerships include joint projects, data-sharing agreements, exchange programmes, and shared research infrastructure. The collaboration model is designed to facilitate translational and interdisciplinary research, and it supports the integration of PhD candidates into larger research environments with access to clinical data, biobanks, and advanced technologies.

Overall, the institutional anchoring and the scope of these collaborations clearly demonstrate that the criterion is **fulfilled**.

> 4. The private university promotes research and development activities by providing for appropriate organisational and structural framework and ensures that the doctoral programme has been adequately incorporated. The private university ensures for an appropriate balance of the teaching, research, and administrative activities of the permanent scientific or scientific-artistic staff, respectively, providing for sufficient time for research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts as well as the supervision of doctoral students.

The private university has established an appropriate organisational and structural framework to promote research and development activities and to ensure that the doctoral programme is fully integrated into its academic environment. The institutional setup includes a dedicated research office that provides comprehensive support for grant applications, research coordination, and publication strategies. According to information provided during the site visit, staff members view this office as highly competent and supportive, especially in assisting with third-party funding applications and international collaborations. The private university also actively incentivises research through institutional awards and targeted internal funding mechanisms. These include seed funding of up to EUR 30,000 for innovative project ideas and structured start-up financing to support the early phases of research commercialisation.

In terms of academic workload, the teaching volume for permanent scientific staff is at approximately four hours per week per semester, which allows sufficient time for research activities and the supervision of doctoral students. This balance is continuously monitored and adjusted as necessary through the internal quality assurance system. Supervisory responsibilities are also supported through formal agreements, training workshops, and regular feedback loops involving doctoral candidates. Overall, the framework in place ensures that academic staff can dedicate adequate time and resources to both high-quality research and effective doctoral supervision.

The experts consider this criterion to be **fulfilled.**

5. The private university's research infrastructure as well as its facilities and equipment are adequate on a quantitative and a qualitative basis for operating the doctoral programme. In the case that the private university draws on external resources, their right of disposal has been secured and the key points thereof shall be described in the application for accreditation of the doctoral programme.

The research infrastructure of the private university is adequate in both qualitative and quantitative terms for the operation of the doctoral programme. The facilities at the Technology and Research Center in Wiener Neustadt include well-equipped laboratories supporting key areas such as medical image processing, AI, biosensor technology, and omics research. A mass spectrometry infrastructure is already in place at DPU Campus Krems and available for research use, while additional services for genomics and transcriptomics are accessible through external providers, ensuring that doctoral candidates can carry out molecular-level analyses when required. At present, no service agreements with the external providers are in place such that every use of the providers has to comply with Austrian tender regulations. If the use of external providers is required frequently, the negotiation of master service agreements seems recommended. Yet, this point is not a general restriction, but merely a point for improvement depending on future developments.

In the area of computing, the private university is currently building up its digital infrastructure and is aware that it will not operate its own large-scale computing cluster. Instead, access to necessary computational resources will be ensured through cooperation agreements and shared usage models. Notably, the partnership with the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt provides access to a GPU server infrastructure located in the same building. Unfortunately, this point was only mentioned during the site visit, but no contractual evidence was provided for this. It seems advisable for DPU to engage in additional contract work to strengthen this claim. At present, however, this is not a limitation or risk, but rather an interesting opportunity. In the meantime, GPUs can easily be used on project basis through commercial services such as Amazon Web Services or Microsoft Azure.

The private university also maintains subscriptions to Wiley, Elsevier, and Thieme, providing doctoral candidates and staff with access to a broad range of high-quality scientific literature. On top of this, an additional subscription to Springer would be advisable.

Furthermore, external research resources are secured through formal cooperation agreements with institutions such as Technion in Israel, Xidian University, and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. These collaborations include access to micro- and nanofabrication facilities and animal research laboratories. In case of limitations or changes in the availability of Chinese facilities, the private university has identified the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna (Vetmed) as a viable alternative for conducting animal experiments, thereby ensuring continuity and flexibility in research options.

DPU's SIM Center for Medical Skills will be used for teaching (30 ECTS) in the doctoral programme. To accommodate the increasing demand for staff, the private university has rented additional office space in the Technology and Research Center in Wiener Neustadt.

Overall, the private university’s infrastructure and access to external facilities are well-aligned with the needs of the doctoral programme.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

The experts recommend implementing the points mentioned above:

- negotiation of master service agreements, if the use of external providers for genomics and transcriptomics is required frequently,
- contract concerning the partnership with University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt and the access to their GPU server,
- subscription to Springer.

3.3 § 18 para. 3 subpara. 1–5: Supervision and counselling services

> 1. The private university concludes agreements with the doctoral students which govern the respective rights and duties of the private university, the doctoral students and their supervisors. A template of the agreement shall be attached to the application for accreditation.

Attached to the application document, a template of the supervision agreement between the supervisor and the student was provided. The document covered most rights and duties of the private university, the doctoral student, and the supervisor. However, the experts were surprised not to find the co-supervisor included as a party in this document. In addition, an agreement on the proposed biweekly meetings between the supervisor and the student was not included in the document. The applicant institution agreed that these topics should be included.

An updated agreement was provided by the institution, so that the experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

> 2. If the private university allows for team supervision of doctoral thesis projects, an adequate supervision concept, including the requirements of all supervisors, shall be outlined.

In the main application document, a habilitation or equivalent qualification was given as a requirement to function as a main supervisor. The main supervisor typically brings specialised knowledge in core areas aligned with DPU's primary research groups such as biosensing, nanomedicine, or image analysis. Co-supervisors can be from clinical fields (typically department or institute heads of the university hospitals) to add a clinical perspective such as patient applications and regulatory requirements. In addition, co-supervisors can be from overlapping research fields, e.g. someone from the machine-learning field can add expertise on complex analyses to a biosensing project. If additional expertise becomes necessary during the project, external advisors or co-supervisors from DPU's partner institutions can be brought in to provide targeted support.

Additional information on the supervision concept was also given in the handbook 'Guidelines for Implementation' that was only submitted subsequently to the site visit. After review of the student's preferences by the Doctoral Affairs Committee, the main supervisor is appointed to the student. Also, a co-supervisor might be appointed to the student if this is relevant for the project.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

- Given that co-supervision is allowed and an important part of the proposed programme, the experts recommend including the requirements for supervisors and co-supervisors in the doctoral regulation document.
- In addition, the experts recommend that the doctoral regulations and the handbook 'Guidelines for Implementation' mention an option for the students to add a potential co-supervisor preference to their initial application to the Doctoral Affairs Committee.

3. With regard to the supervision of doctoral thesis projects and adequate for the respective discipline, the private university provides for an appropriate number of doctoral students per supervisor. In the case of team supervision, the number of doctoral students shall relate to the main supervisor.

The applicant institution stated that they would accept a maximum of 15 students per year and 45 students in the final stage in total. They are planning to have 15 supervisors (cf. § 18 para. 5 subpara. 2), of which 12 are permanent professors at the institution, available for these students. The experts found that the resulting average number of 3 to 4 students per supervisor seems reasonable.

If the regular duration of studies is extended to 4 years (cf. condition to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4) and 15 students are admitted per year, this results in 4 to 5 students per supervisor in the final stage, which is still appropriate.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

4. The private university enables the doctoral students to engage in an intensive dialogue with scientists and/or artists by co-operating with higher education institutions and, if applicable, partners outside the higher education area in Austria and abroad, and promotes the doctoral students' participation in national and international symposia.

According to the application document, the private university provides opportunities for the doctoral students to interact with other scientists on a national and international basis. This includes annual symposia at the private university's Dürnstein premises with top-tier global researchers and industry leaders. Already established co-operations exist among others with University of Cambridge, University of Lille, University of Sydney, University of Toronto, Medical University of Vienna, the company medphoton, and Austrian Center of Medical Innovation and Technology (cf. § 18 para. 2 subpara. 3). In addition, large collaborative projects at the private university, such as the COMET project PI-SENS with 27 partnering companies and institutions, indicate that PhD theses can be delivered.

During the site visit, the representatives of the institution also mentioned a symposium that is already planned in collaboration with Stanford University. They also highlighted the importance of students as communicators of their research in these settings and the importance of their presence on conferences to attract new collaborators, students, and future employees. The experts were also happy to hear from the students that participation in conferences was frequently possible for them, and that they were always allowed to present their scientific results there themselves. The private university will provide a budget of EUR 12,000.00 EUR per year for materials and travel costs for each doctoral student.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

5. The private university provides the doctoral students with appropriate counselling services which are tailored to the specific degree programme.

According to the application document, the institution provides counselling services including an obudsman for academic affairs, individualised academic advising, mentorship, administrative assistance, and career-oriented support. A research and development office that helps students with academic matters such as applying for their own funds is also available. Extracurricular workshops that are focused on skills for research valorisation, intellectual property management, and socio-economic impact assessment will also be made available.

The experts found that many parts of these counselling services concentrate on few people from the private university, who happen to be also involved in research, teaching, and supervision of doctoral students. The experts note that while this might work well in the current setting, it might get more difficult once the doctoral programme scales up and attention should be paid to whether additional independent personal will be required for these services in the future.

During the site visit, the experts were happy to hear that the students reported that all professors can be approached any time and that a psychological counselling service is also provided by the private university for students in need of it.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

The experts recommend paying attention to whether additional independent personnel will be required for counselling services with increasing size of the doctoral programme.

3.4 § 18 para. 4 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 doctoral programmes with special profile elements, the descriptions shall furthermore address these characteristics defining the profile. Special profile elements in doctoral programmes may include, for example, distance-learning degree programmes or joint study programmes.
1. 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

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

d. comply with the respective qualification level of the National Qualifications Framework.

According to the application document, the guidelines for implementation and the provided Diploma Supplement, the profile of the doctoral programme is focussing on aspects like leadership, critical decision-making, transformative changes and incorporating elements of humanities, social sciences, ethics, innovation, entrepreneurship, and intrapreneurship. Seven intended learning outcomes are being defined: (a) Develop Interdisciplinary Expertise, (b) Foster Innovation and Leadership, (c) Promote Collaboration, (d) Enhance Practical Impact, (e) Advance Ethical and Socio-Cultural Awareness, (f) Improve Patient Outcomes, and (g) Encourage Lifelong Learning.

On the other hand, the doctoral regulations state that the purpose of the doctoral programme is to certify a candidate's ability to carry out independent, original, and high-quality research that advances knowledge in their field as well as to showcase the candidate's expertise in using advanced methodologies, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills to address intricate questions.

Therefore, from the experts' point of view, the profile and intended learning outcomes have not been consistently defined in the provided documents, which affects their clarity.

Furthermore, the profile and intended learning outcomes as stated in the application document, the guidelines for implementation and the Diploma Supplement, only partially reflect discipline-specific-scientific skills. In particular, the strong focus on leadership, critical decision-making, and entrepreneurship – although important aspects for the future career of some of the candidates – is not fully adequate for the profile of a doctoral programme and only partly complies with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities (in the case of a doctoral programme, this is primarily preparation for an academic career) and with level 8 of the National Qualification Framework. From the experts' point of view, for a doctoral programme, therefore a stronger focus should be put on academic thinking and expert knowledge in the respective fields, generating new insights and knowledge and contributing to advancements and innovation within the respective fields.

Thus, the experts consider the criterion to be **partially fulfilled.**

The experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the profile and intended learning outcomes comply with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities (in the case of a doctoral programme, this is primarily preparation for an academic career) and with level 8 of the National Qualification Framework and that they are defined consistently in the relevant documents (application document, guidelines for implementation, doctoral regulations, Diploma Supplement).

2. The name of the degree programme and the academic degree correspond to the degree programme's profile.

The name of the degree programme (Precision and Personalized Medicine) and the academic degree (Doctor of Philosophy, PhD) correspond to the actual content of the degree programme, but do not fully reflect the degree programme's profile. As discussed in § 18 para. 4 subpara. 1, the current emphasis on leadership, critical decision-making etc. is not reflected in the name

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

and the academic degree whereas aspects related to precision and personalised medicine, expert knowledge, and academic thinking are underrepresented in the formulation of the profile and the intended learning outcomes.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be **partially fulfilled.**

The experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the name of the degree programme and the academic degree correspond to the degree programme's profile.

3. The minimum duration of studies stipulated in the curriculum is three years. The curriculum ensures by its content and structure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, while connecting research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts and teaching.

As outlined in the application document and the Diploma Supplement, the regular duration of studies for the doctoral programme is six semesters (equivalent to three years). Extensions beyond three years may be granted upon formal, justified requests for unforeseen circumstances. Furthermore, in the doctoral regulations, the acceptance as a doctoral candidate is declared to be valid for a period of four years, with the possibility of extensions being granted in justified cases such as delays due to unforeseen circumstances or approved leave of absence. Finally, during the interviews with representatives, an expected duration of studies between three and a half and four years was indicated. From the expert's point of view, this seems somehow contradictory.

The general structure of the doctoral programme with 30 ECTS allocated for coursework and academic activities and 150 ECTS dedicated to research activities is appropriate. The core courses represent different disciplines (Biomedical Sciences, Life Sciences, Engineering, Computer Sciences, Interdisciplinary Courses) and with the students having to select three courses from three different disciplines (18 ECTS in total), interdisciplinary competency is ensured. The elective courses (specialized electives) again represent different disciplines (Medical Imaging, AI in Healthcare, Drug Delivery Systems, Advanced Biosensing, Computational Biology, Regulatory Sciences, Health Economics) and students have to select two, ideally aligned with their research focus (8 ECTS in total). Finally, students must complete two professional development workshops (Teaching Methods, Supervision Skills, 4 ECTS in total).

The content of the course programme appears suitable for a doctoral programme in PPM and for the profile and intended achievements as outlined in the doctoral regulations. However, the strong focus on leadership, critical decision-making, and entrepreneurship as indicated in the profile and intended learning outcomes defined in the application document, the guidelines for implementation and the Diploma Supplement (cf. § 18 para. 4 subpara. 1) is only partially covered by the curriculum. According to the module handbook, these aspects are not addressed or only addressed as part of some of the courses. Due to the selection possibilities (3 out of offered 12 core courses, 2 out of 12 offered elective courses), it is not ensured that students are taught these aspects and therewith that the students achieve the intended learning outcomes.

According to the application document and information given during the interviews, extra-curricular courses (cf. § 18 para. 3 subpara. 5) will be offered in addition with no ECTS credits

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

to be awarded. However, the profile and structure of the degree programme should be defined by the contained courses and in particular by the awarding of credits.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be **partially fulfilled.**

The experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the learning outcomes can be achieved by completing the curricular courses (without completing extracurricular courses for which no ECTS are provided). This can be demonstrated by simply changing the profile and learning outcomes of the degree programme in line with the existing curriculum.

Recommendations:

- It is strongly recommended that discrepancies in the wording between the application document, doctoral regulations, and module handbook are eliminated (e.g. specialized electives vs. elective courses), in particular for the documents that will be available and important for the future students.
- Additionally, the information regarding the duration of the doctoral programme should be clarified (cf. condition to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4).

4. 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 ensures that the intended learning outcomes, and especially preparing a doctoral thesis, can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies.

The experts agree that the ECTS appears to be correctly applied to the various activities and that the workload attributed to the individual curricular activities is adequate.

The coursework (30 ECTS in total) consisting of core courses (18 ECTS), elective courses (8 ECTS) and workshops and training (4 ECTS) is comprehensive and well-organised. Courses are offered annually and intended to be completed within the first two years of the programme.

The original research and doctoral thesis (150 ECTS in total) include the submission of a detailed research proposal by the end of the first year, annual progress evaluations via presentations and reports, a seminar lecture during the midterm and final year presenting research findings as well as the submission and defense of the doctoral thesis evaluated by internal and external reviewers. Although in general these components appear appropriate for completing the thesis within the stipulated duration of three years, the experts are somewhat concerned about the content and the timing of the required research proposal. According to the application documents, the research proposal is indicated to serve as the foundation for the PhD candidacy examination and should have approximately 25 pages, including the following aspects: background and literature review, research problem and its significance, research goals, work plan, research methods, and preliminary results. Based on the proposal, the feasibility, scientific merit of the proposed research, and alignment with the objectives of the doctoral programme as well as the candidate's understanding of the background and literature and their capacity and suitability for the proposed PhD research project are assessed by a Proposal Examination Committee. Based on these regulations, this implies that the candidates have a maximum of two years (practically even less) for conducting their actual research work, getting at least two or three (depending on the type of the thesis) publications accepted in scientific journals, preparing the doctoral thesis and passing the final examination of the thesis. From the experts'

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

point of view, this seems at least ambitious, and the experts expect this to lead to study durations beyond three years.

During the discussions with the representatives of DPU it was stated that – partially going beyond the regulations – the research proposal should rather be seen as a combination of proposal and interim report, with parts of the research work already conducted instead of including only preliminary results, as indicated by the regulations. This in turn raises the question of the meaningfulness of assessing the proposal in terms of its scientific merit, feasibility, and alignment with the objectives of the doctoral programme at this point.

Finally, the following requirements are formulated for the dissertation in the (revised) doctoral regulations: A cumulative dissertation requires three subject-specific publications (more are recommended) with the doctoral candidate listed as the lead author (or listed as the first or lead author, cf. recommendations to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 5) published or accepted for publication by a renowned subject-specific publication organ (all publications shall appear in Q1 journals). A monography requires at least two peer-reviewed articles which must be published or accepted for publication.

Whereas these requirements will promote scientific excellence of the dissertation projects, their fulfilment within the stipulated duration of three years is likewise at least ambitious, in particular with respect to the unpredictability of publication review processes.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be **partially fulfilled.**

The experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the workload is conceived to ensure that the intended learning outcomes, especially preparing a doctoral thesis, can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. This could be demonstrated, for example, by one of the following two options:

a. Adaptation of the structure of the programme, in particular with respect to the timing and content of the research proposal, and of the requirements for the dissertation with respect to the number of publications,
b. Extension of the standard duration of the programme to four years while keeping the current structure and requirements. If this option is followed, a revised budget plan needs to be submitted taking into account the increased duration and costs per doctoral student (cf. condition to criterion § 18 para. 6).

5. Regulations for doctoral programmes have been established. The examination methods are suitable to assess whether and to what extent the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.

The doctoral regulations are outlined in Appendix 10 (revised after the site visit) of the application document. Examination methods of the courses and workshops (30 ECTS in total) include mid-term and final exams, lab works, case studies, among others. The examination methods are suitable to assess whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Apart from the 30 ECTS for various courses, diverse examination methods are employed such as proposal examination, lecture seminars, and annual reviews to ensure progress towards the intended learning outcomes.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

Some issues concerning the doctoral regulations remain, including:

- The definition of lead authorship in the regulations for the cumulative thesis should be made clear. Whereas, according to § 2 para. 7 of the doctoral regulations, three first or lead authorship publications are required for a cumulative thesis, the other provisions of the doctoral regulations require three lead authorship publications. This should also be clarified.
- The duration of the oral defense should be specified and equal across all doctoral students.
- Doctoral students should be allowed to inspect the review reports by examiners.
- It is unclear which decision-making body is responsible for appointing the Proposal Examination Committee and the Doctoral Affairs Committee.
- The size of the Proposal Examination Committee remains unclear.
- It remains unclear how many expert opinions are obtained (e.g. 'At least two of the three reviewers must be drawn from the original Proposal Examination Committee to maintain continuity and a clear understanding of the research journey' vs. 'The doctoral candidate may review the negative expert opinion and propose a third reviewer.') and which members of the Examination Committee have to write a review report. In many other doctoral degree programmes, supervisors are not allowed to write review reports in order to distinguish the role of supervisor and reviewer.
- Despite the justification, it is not appropriate that doctoral students need to gain at least 'gut' to pass the final exam. This is not common in Austria with a grade range from 1 to 5 with 5 being unsatisfactory. Please refer to the Diploma Supplement (Appendix 17 of the application, page 9) with information on the Austrian Higher Education System.
- In relation to § 11 of the doctoral regulations, it remains unclear to what extent written expert opinions and the defense of the doctoral thesis weigh in the overall grading. This needs to be specified a priori.
- In relation to § 11 of the doctoral regulations, it also remains unclear under which circumstances the grade 'sehr gut' is awarded. A revision is needed as it refers to 'summa cum laude' and mentions only two expert opinions. This also needs to be adjusted in the guidelines for implementation, where 'summa cum laude' is also mentioned.
- The revised Appendix 10 (doctoral regulations) and the revised Appendix 13 (guidelines for implementation) should be checked to match in regard to key contents and terminology. For instance, the terms 'Overall Program Evaluation' or 'Research Progress Reports' in the revised Appendix 13 are not mentioned in the revised Appendix 10. Also, it is unclear what is meant by the qualifying examination and whether the candidacy examination is the same as the proposal examination. According to Appendix 10, the seminar lecture must be held twice (midterm and final), whereas according to Appendix 13, it is required only once (final).
- In the revised Appendix 10 it still says that 'Detailed requirements for writing a monograph or a cumulative doctoral thesis shall be specified by the Doctoral Affairs Committee in the Implementation Rules'. This can now be removed as the revised doctoral regulations (§ 2 para. 4 and 7) include the information. However, the

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

requirements regarding the structure of the cumulative dissertation do not make it entirely clear that the articles themselves are to be included as part of the cumulative dissertation, since the list only refers to a brief overview of each article, but not to the articles themselves.

- The revised Appendix 10 needs another revision in wording to ensure consistency, clarity and improve language. See e.g. § 14 ('Persons who Individuals who') and § 2 para. 3 ('Candidates are encouraged' when it is required).

The experts therefore recommend revising the doctoral regulations and the guidelines for implementation.

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 programme's Diploma Supplement is intended to provide a detailed and transparent record of the qualifications acquired, thereby facilitating both academic and professional recognition. However, a significant concern is that the programme's requirements are currently imprecise. This refers especially to the profile and learning outcomes. In order for the Diploma Supplement to effectively support mobility and recognition, the underlying programme requirements must be specific, clear, and precisely defined, ensuring that the qualifications earned are accurately and transparently represented to international institutions and potential employers.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be **partially fulfilled.**

The experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the Diploma Supplement aligns with the actual profile and learning outcomes and that the programme requirements are specific, clear, and precisely defined.

The Diploma Supplement refers to an official length of studies of six semesters. If the duration of the curriculum is extended (cf. condition to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4), before the start of the doctoral programme, additional proof must be provided that the Diploma Supplement has been adjusted in accordance with the changed duration of studies.

7. The admission requirements to the degree programme have been clearly defined and are in accordance with the requirements of a doctoral programme.

Admission criteria are set in § 4 of the doctoral regulations. To be eligible for entry into the doctoral programme, prospective candidates must satisfy a comprehensive set of requirements, primarily categorised into academic qualifications, language proficiency, required application documentation, and, in some instances, additional programme-specific demands.

Academically, applicants must have achieved NQR Level 7 to be formally enrolled in the degree programme. Furthermore, a Master's degree or its recognised equivalent from an accredited institution is mandatory, accompanied by a minimum GPA of 2.7 (or an equivalent grade representing over 80%). For applicants whose Master's degree does not involve research, supplementary prerequisites may be necessary which could include engaging in exploratory research or undertaking additional coursework to ensure foundational preparedness. The programme welcomes candidates from a broad spectrum of relevant disciplines, notably

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

including Biomedical Sciences, Medical Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Data Sciences and AI, Life Sciences, Public Health and Epidemiology, and Translational Sciences and Clinical Applications. Additionally, individuals holding a Diploma or Master's degree in Medicine or Dentistry (Dr. med. dent. or Dr. med. univ.) are also eligible.

Beyond academic prerequisites, candidates must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English. For non-native English speakers, this typically entails providing official scores from the TOEFL exam (a score greater than 80) or the IELTS test (a score greater than 6.5). However, an exemption from this requirement is granted to candidates who have previously completed academic degrees conducted entirely in English.

As part of the application process, candidates are required to submit specific documentation. This includes transcripts and diplomas from all prior academic institutions attended, along with two academic recommendation letters, one of which must explicitly be from their Master's thesis advisor. A crucial component of the application is a research intent letter which must thoroughly detail the proposed area of study and the specific research objectives the candidate aims to pursue within the programme. Finally, official GRE scores are also a mandatory submission.

It is important to note that certain departments or specific programmes within the private university may stipulate additional admission requirements. These supplementary conditions, determined by the Doctoral Affairs Committee, might encompass interviews, a demand for specific preparatory coursework, or the completion of pre-assessment tasks designed to further evaluate a candidate's suitability for their chosen field of study.

The experts note the following issues:

- It is unclear, who decides on additional training required for non-research Master's degree.
- The note that 'Certain departments or programs may impose additional requirements, such as interviews, specific preparatory coursework, or pre-assessment tasks, as determined by the Doctoral Affairs Committee' is unclear. It remains non-transparent.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be **partially fulfilled.**

The experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the admission requirements to the degree programme are clearly defined. Therefore, the institution has to provide evidence that it has been determined who is responsible for deciding on the additional training in case of a non-research Master's degree and that additional requirements such as interviews, specific preparatory coursework, or pre-assessment tasks are determined clearly from the outset.

Recommendations:

- Notes on non-research Master's degrees are repeated in § 4 para. 1 subpara. 1 of the doctoral regulations. This should be removed.
- Requirement of GRE scores for a doctoral programme seems ambitious given the timelines for the beginning of the programme and in relation to other established institutions in the region. This requirement could be reconsidered.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

- Usually, interviews or similar are defined as part of the admission process (§ 6 of the doctoral regulations). Admission requirements themselves are formal aspects such as speaking skills, Master's level etc. This could be re-arranged.

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.

§ 6 (Acceptance as a Doctoral Candidate) of the doctoral regulations outlines the process for acceptance into the doctoral programme, primarily managed by the Doctoral Affairs Committee. This committee holds a crucial role in upholding the integrity of the doctoral programme by ensuring strict compliance with the doctoral regulations and the module manual. Its responsibilities encompass meticulously evaluating all applications, verifying candidate eligibility, approving suitable supervisors, and committing to the continuous oversight and robust support of the entire doctoral procedure once a candidate is officially accepted.

Students aspiring to become doctoral candidates are required to submit a formal request for acceptance to the Doctoral Affairs Committee before they commence the preparation of their doctoral thesis. This request must be comprehensive, including concrete evidence that all admission criteria specified in § 4 have been rigorously fulfilled. Additionally, the application must propose a working title for the doctoral thesis and nominate a supervisor who has already received approval from the Doctoral Affairs Committee for the designated research area. A signed agreement between the doctoral candidate and their primary supervisor, along with any co-supervisors where applicable, is also a mandatory component. Furthermore, candidates must provide a sworn statement affirming that they have not concurrently submitted a request for acceptance or admission to a doctoral procedure at any other institution. The Doctoral Affairs Committee is responsible for thoroughly reviewing all submitted documents, ensuring they meet the programme's stringent standards before proceeding with the evaluation process.

While § 6 clearly assigns the Doctoral Affairs Committee the responsibility for reviewing and deciding on acceptance, it is not explicitly defined which specific criteria are used for this review and decision. The doctoral regulations themselves do not provide detailed guidelines for the committee's evaluation standards, beyond the formal admission requirements in § 4 (such as NQR level 7, Master's degree with minimum GPA, language proficiency, and disciplinary background).

During the analysis, it was noted that the information presented in the supplementary submission of the revised Appendix 13 (guidelines for implementation) under 'Admissions and Supervision Structure', particularly regarding 'Step 1: Application Review and Acceptance' and 'Step 2: Approval of Supervisors', does not appear to be fully integrated into the official doctoral regulations or at least is not referenced there. Appendix 13 states that DPU will carefully review each applicant's qualifications, prior accomplishments, and research potential. It also emphasises that only candidates who meet the programme's rigorous academic standards will be admitted, and each admitted student must have an approved supervisor whose expertise aligns with the proposed research. Furthermore, DPU will ensure that supervisors are balanced in their workload, preventing overloads and ensuring equitable mentorship across the programme. Regarding supervisor approval, Appendix 13 specifies that the doctoral student

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

must ensure that an appropriate supervisor is identified whose research interests align with the proposed research. This alignment will be verified by DPU during the application review. These additional details from Appendix 13 are not adequately anchored or referenced within the doctoral regulations themselves, leading to a discrepancy in the available information. This inconsistency affects the clarity of the admission process.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion to be **partially fulfilled.**

The experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the criteria for acceptance as a student are clearly defined, either by incorporating the additional details of the admission process from the guidelines for implementation into the doctoral regulations or by referencing the additional details of the admission process in the doctoral regulations.

Recommendation:

It is strongly recommended that the complete and binding admission procedure be published in detail on the private university's website and that this information is actively communicated to potential applicants through informational materials. This would help to strengthen confidence in the fairness and clarity of the entire procedure.

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 and

b. are transparent for all involved.

Procedures for the recognition of formally, non-formally, and informally acquired competencies are outlined. This includes the recognition of coursework and examinations from other recognised higher education institutions, both Austrian and foreign, unless significant differences in knowledge and skills are identified. Non-formal institutional examinations and even informal competencies can also be credited, provided they meet specific criteria and are justified and recognised by the head of the degree programme.

During the site visit, students (from the human medicine programme) confirmed the straightforwardness of the(ir) recognition process. The process for them is handled by the secretariat, with the final decision made by the head of the degree programme, comparing individual exams. Students also mentioned that they received personal advice on what would be credited and what supplementary courses might be beneficial, indicating a practical and personalised application of these stated procedures.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

As it is not entirely clear, it is recommended to include in the doctoral regulations the main contact person for PhD candidates wishing to apply for recognition of prior learning.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

3.5 § 18 para. 5 subpara. 1–3: Staff

1. In accordance with the development plan, the private university has employed a sufficient number of permanent professors in the discipline relevant for the doctoral programme who cover the whole range of the discipline's content and methods in order to adequately supervise doctoral thesis projects. 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.

According to the application documents, 10 permanent professors are currently employed at DPU (9 full-time positions, 1 with an employment of 20 hours per week). 2 additional full-time positions will start with September and October 2025, respectively. Therewith, a total of 12 permanent professors will be available as supervisors for the doctoral thesis projects. They cover the range of disciplines and scientific aspects of the planned programme, in particular with respect to the core themes prioritised at this early stage of the implementation of the programme such as medical imaging, AI, biosensors, and data science (cf. § 18 para. 2 subpara. 1). According to the application documents and information given during the site visit, DPU plans to establish new interdisciplinary research areas to enhance the capabilities of the existing working groups and to broaden the perspective with respect to PPM.

In addition, 38 permanent professors from the university clinics are listed as possible co-supervisors, covering a broad spectrum of medical disciplines, therewith ensuring the integration of a clinical perspective in the respective doctoral thesis supervision.

The number of professors involved in the doctoral programme as supervisors appears to be appropriate and sufficient.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

It is strongly recommended for DPU to realise the planned extension in their research programme by integrating new interdisciplinary themes, thereby increasing the number of permanent professors and expanding the thematic scope of their expertise to further broaden the perspective of the envisioned doctoral programme.

2. The private university has sufficient scientific or scientific-artistic teaching and research staff, respectively, that is appropriately qualified for the teaching and research activities provided for in the degree programme. The persons provided for the supervision of doctoral thesis projects

a. are authorised to teach (venia docendi) or have an equivalent qualification in the respective scientific and/or scientific-artistic discipline;

b. are actively involved in the activities in research and development and/or the advancement and appreciation of the arts in the specific discipline and

c. for the most part, have experience in supervising doctoral thesis projects.

In the case of team supervision, the requirements pursuant to § 18 para. 5 subpara. 2 lit. a to c shall apply for the main supervisor.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

According to the application documents, 15 persons will be available for supervision of doctoral thesis projects, 12 of them are permanent professors (cf. § 18 para. 5 subpara. 1). 10 of the supervisors are habilitated in the respective discipline, 4 have an equivalent qualification, demonstrated by either professorships at other recognised universities or a habilitation equivalent research profile together with an accreditation to supervise doctoral students at other recognised universities or research institutions. One person is expected to habilitate in 2025 at University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU). By a letter from the university, it is confirmed that he has initiated the habilitation process at BOKU and that it is on track to be completed in 2025. His excellent research profile, demonstrated among others by a high number of publications and citations, together with his experience in teaching and (co-)supervision, can already be considered as habilitation equivalent.

The active involvement of the intended supervisors in research and development activities has been convincingly demonstrated both in the application documents and during the discussion with DPU representatives. They have strong h-indices as well as appropriate publication lists in relation to their respective scientific career stages and have been successful in acquiring third-party funding.

The intended supervisors have – for the most part – experience in supervising doctoral thesis. 12 of the 15 supervisors have previously supervised doctoral students, the 3 remaining are currently supervising doctoral students. However, this experience is unevenly distributed, with 8 of the 15 having 6 or less previous or current supervisions. Therewith, it should be ensured that supervisors with less experience receive support from the more experienced supervisors and take part in the personnel development measures for supervisors offered by DPU (cf. § 18 para. 5 subpara. 3).

In addition, 38 clinical co-supervisors from university hospitals will be involved (cf. § 18 para. 5 subpara. 1), contributing clinical expertise within their respective disciplines. Finally, a list of 30 scientists is provided in the application documents, representing the broader research environment. According to the application documents, they will actively contribute to the supervision process by participating as part of the supervisory teams, under the guidance and coordination of the primary supervisors. These scientists are appropriately qualified (both formally and in terms of experience) for the teaching and research activities provided in the doctoral programme.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

It is strongly recommended to ensure that supervisors with less experience receive support from the more experienced supervisors and take part in the personnel development measures for supervisors offered by DPU.

3. The private university provides for personnel development measures for supervisors that are aimed at the supervision of doctoral students.

The private university has implemented personnel development measures for supervisors that are specifically aimed at supporting the supervision of doctoral students. The institution offers a dedicated seminar series on good doctoral supervision practices, as outlined in the application. These seminars address topics such as mentoring strategies, conflict management, research

ethics, and academic writing support. They are intended to ensure that supervisors are well-prepared to guide doctoral candidates effectively throughout their research journey.

Furthermore, the private university has published comprehensive supervision guidelines which define roles, responsibilities, and best practices. However, the experts noted some inconsistencies between these guidelines and the regulations found in Appendix 10 (doctoral regulations) and the main application document. These discrepancies primarily concern procedural details such as the timing and structure of seminar lectures and the definition of supervision team roles.

Despite this, the overall framework for supporting and developing supervisory staff is considered robust.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendation:

The experts recommend resolving the inconsistencies between the supervision guidelines and the doctoral regulations.

3.6 § 18 para. 6 subpara. 1–2: 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 doctoral 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.

In the application document, the institution provided costs calculations for a period of six years that seemed plausible. These core costs were stated to be covered from already available funds of the existing bachelor and master programme in human medicine as well as third-party funding and tuition fees. From the bachelor and master funds, the applicant institution is planning to finance 5 doctoral students, the research infrastructure and most of the teaching. Tuition fees will be used to finance guest lecturers. Third-party funding is considered to finance 10 additional doctoral students per year. During the site visit, the institution confirmed that they already have 8 open PhD positions at the moment and that further projects have been accepted for funding since the application. Thus, the financing of 10 students through third-party funding seems realistic. However, it is planned to reduce the number of students in case that only insufficient third-party funding is available in the future.

Overall, the stated funds make it convincing that the students should be able to complete their degree programme even in the event of its discontinuation. The existence of the funding in the stated form was confirmed during the site visit. However, the experts recommended to the applicant institution to further provide actual budget information in addition to the cost

calculations. The provided actual overall tuition fees from the bachelor and master programme in human medicine and the detailed third-party funding information that the institution provided in the subsequent submission make it plausible that the costs are covered.

The experts consider the criterion to be **fulfilled.**

However, in case that the duration of the curriculum would be extended (cf. § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4), the criterion would only be **partially fulfilled**, since the financial plan of the application document assumes funding for students for only three years.

In this case, the experts propose the Board of AQ Austria to decide on the following **condition:**

Before the start of the degree programme, proof must be provided that funding for the changed duration of studies is secured.

4 Summary and final evaluation

(1) Development and quality assurance of the doctoral programme

DPU employs a defined process for curriculum development. Its Quality Assurance Council (QSRH) in cooperation with the Senate oversees it. They establish working groups to ensure that curricula meet current standards and are aligned with the private university's development plan. This structured approach, supported by the Directorate of Academic Coordination and Management, was evident in the development of the doctoral programme in PPM. It incorporated insights from a wide variety of global academic and industry leaders such as Harvard Medical School, Stanford University, and Roche, ensuring the curriculum's scientific depth, clinical relevance, and entrepreneurial focus. Following its accreditation, the doctoral programme will be fully integrated into the private university's established quality management system, as detailed in its quality assurance manual. This system, managed by the QSRH, operates on a continuous PDCA cycle, ensuring ongoing compliance with accreditation criteria and fostering continuous improvement across studies, teaching, research, and development.

The experts consider the criteria § 18 para. 1 subpara. 1 and 2 to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

- For future curriculum design and development, the experts recommend strengthening the formal integration of student voices.
- Also, the experts recommend incorporating student representatives to the Quality Assurance Council and to the Doctoral Advisory Board and integrating the Doctoral Advisory Board into the university-wide quality assurance system, including the quality assurance manual.
- In addition, the criteria in Quality Assurance Measure 12 should be continuously adapted to the current version of the national legal frameworks for quality assurance.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

(2) Research environment

DPU outlines a research concept embedded within its institutional profile and objectives, which serves as the foundation for the proposed doctoral programme. The degree programme is integrated into the broader research strategy entitled 'Personalized Medicine Enabled by Artificial Intelligence & Intelligent Sensing Systems (PI-SENS).' This overarching concept defines interdisciplinary research priorities in areas such as data science, medical imaging, biotechnology, AI, sensors, and omics, with a particular emphasis on translational medicine. The application lists numerous third-party funded projects indicating broad integration into national and international research consortia. The private university has provided clear evidence of a well-developed network of national and international partnerships involving universities, clinical institutions, and industry. The university hospitals in Wiener Neustadt, Neunkirchen, and Hochegg are integrated into DPU's academic and research framework through contracts and joint project structures.

The private university has established an appropriate organisational and structural framework to promote research and development activities. This includes seed funding for innovative project ideas and structured start-up financing to support the early phases of research commercialisation. In terms of academic workload, the teaching volume for permanent scientific staff is at approximately four hours per week per semester, which allows sufficient time for research activities and the supervision of doctoral students. This balance is continuously monitored and adjusted as necessary through the internal quality assurance system.

The facilities at the Technology and Research Center in Wiener Neustadt include well-equipped laboratories supporting key areas such as medical image processing, AI, biosensor technology, and omics research. A mass spectrometry infrastructure is already in place at DPU Campus Krems and available for research use, while additional services for genomics and transcriptomics are accessible through external providers, ensuring that doctoral candidates can carry out molecular-level analyses when required. Furthermore, external research resources are secured through formal cooperation agreements with institutions such as Technion in Israel, Xidian University, and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. These collaborations include access to micro- and nanofabrication facilities and animal research laboratories.

The experts consider the criteria § 18 para. 2 subpara. 1 to 5 to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

- The experts strongly recommend further consolidating and clarifying the prioritisation of thematic research fields in order to strengthen the programme's coherence and ensure alignment between strategic vision and operational capacity.
- The experts recommend placing greater emphasis on fundamental research, which could be demonstrated by additional funding from the FWF or ERC, as the current portfolio focuses strongly on applied research.
- If the use of external providers for genomics and transcriptomics is required frequently, the negotiation of master service agreements is recommended.
- The experts recommend engaging in contract work related to the GPU server infrastructure and partnership with the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt.
- A subscription to Springer would be advisable.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

(3) Supervision and counselling services

The revised template of the supervision agreement covers the rights and duties of the private university, the doctoral student, and the supervisor. A habilitation or equivalent qualification is required to serve as a main supervisor. The main supervisor typically brings specialised knowledge in core areas aligned with DPU's primary research groups such as biosensing, nano-medicine, or image analysis. Co-supervisors can be from clinical fields or overlapping research fields. The resulting average number of 3 to 4 students per supervisor is appropriate. The private university provides opportunities for the doctoral students to interact with other scientists on a national and international basis, including a budget for materials and travel costs for each doctoral student. The private university offers counselling services such as an ombudsman for academic affairs, individualised academic advising, mentoring, administrative support, and a research and development office.

The experts consider the criteria § 18 subpara. 3 para. 1 to 5 to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

- Given that co-supervision is allowed and an important part of the proposed programme, the experts recommend including the requirements for supervisors and co-supervisors in the doctoral regulations.
- The doctoral regulations and the handbook 'Guidelines for Implementation' should mention an option for the students to add a potential co-supervisor preference to their initial application to the Doctoral Affairs Committee.
- In addition, the experts recommend paying attention to whether additional independent personnel will be required for counselling services with increasing size of the doctoral programme.

(4) Degree programme and degree programme management

The profile and intended learning outcomes have not been coherently defined in the provided documents and are inconsistent between the application document, the Diploma Supplement, the doctoral regulation, and the guidelines for implementation. The profile and intended learning outcomes as stated in the application document, the guidelines for implementation and the Diploma Supplement only partially reflect discipline-specific-scientific skills. In particular, the strong focus on leadership, critical decision-making, and entrepreneurship is not fully adequate for the profile of a doctoral programme and only partly complies with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities (in the case of a doctoral programme, this is primarily preparation for an academic career) and with level 8 of the National Qualification Framework. A stronger focus should therefore be put on academic thinking and expert knowledge in the respective fields, generating new insights and knowledge and contributing to advancements and innovation within the respective fields.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 1 to be **partially fulfilled.**

The name of the degree programme (Precision and Personalized Medicine) and the academic degree (Doctor of Philosophy, PhD) correspond to the actual content of the degree programme, but do not fully reflect the degree programme's profile. The current emphasis on leadership, critical decision-making etc. is not reflected in the name and the academic degree, whereas aspects related to personalised medicine, expert knowledge, and academic thinking are underrepresented in the profile and the intended learning outcomes.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 2 to be **partially fulfilled.**

The regular duration of studies for the doctoral programme is six semesters (equivalent to three years), although different and contradictory information has been given in the doctoral regulations and during the site visit. The general structure of the programme with 30 ECTS allocated for coursework and academic activities and 150 ECTS dedicated to research activities is appropriate. The offered core courses, elective courses, and workshops ensure interdisciplinary competency. However, the strong focus on leadership, critical decision-making, and entrepreneurship, as indicated in the profile and intended learning outcomes, is not reflected by the curriculum.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 3 to be **partially fulfilled.**

It appears that the ECTS is correctly applied to the various activities and that the workload attributed to the individual curricular activities is adequate. The coursework is comprehensive and well-organised. Although in general the components of the original research and doctoral thesis (research proposal, annual progress evaluations, seminar lectures, submission and defense of doctoral thesis) appear appropriate for completing the thesis within the stipulated duration of three years, the experts are somewhat concerned about the content and the timing of the required research proposal by the end of the first year. Since it shall serve for the examination of the suitability of the research project and the PhD candidate, this leaves a maximum of two years for conducting the actual research work. The experts expect this to lead to study durations beyond three years. During the site visit, it was stated that the research proposal is rather a combination of proposal and interim report. This in turn raises the question of the meaningfulness of assessing the proposal at this point. Likewise, the fulfilment of the formulated requirements for the PhD thesis (at least three subject-specific publications with the doctoral candidate as a lead (or first) author for a cumulative dissertation, at least two publications for a monograph) within three years appears at least ambitious, although these requirements would promote scientific excellence of the dissertation projects.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4 to be **partially fulfilled.**

Regulations for the doctoral programme have been established. Examination methods of courses and workshops include mid-term and final exams, lab works, case studies, among others. Furthermore, diverse examination methods are employed such as proposal examination, lecture seminars, and annual reviews. The examination methods are suitable to assess whether and to what extent the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.

The experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 5 to be **fulfilled.**

The Diploma Supplement is specific to the programme. However, the significant concerns about the imprecision of the programme's requirements, in particular with respect to the profile and learning outcomes, are reflected in the Diploma Supplement as well. Here, the underlying programme requirements must be specific, clear, and precisely defined to ensure that the qualifications earned are accurately and transparently represented and academic and professional recognition of the acquired qualifications is facilitated.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 6 to be **partially fulfilled.**

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

The Diploma Supplement refers to an official length of studies of six semesters. If the duration of the curriculum is extended (cf. condition to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4), the Diploma Supplement has to be adjusted in accordance with the changed duration of studies.

Admission criteria are set in § 4 of the doctoral regulations. Prospective candidates must satisfy a comprehensive set of requirements, primarily categorised into academic qualifications (Master's degree or equivalent), language proficiency (English), required application documentation, and, in some instances, additional programme-specific demands. The programme welcomes candidates from a broad spectrum of relevant disciplines. For applicants whose Master's degree does not involve research, supplementary prerequisites may be necessary, which could include engaging in exploratory research or undertaking additional coursework to ensure foundational preparedness. Finally, official GRE scores are also a mandatory submission. It is important to note that certain departments or specific programmes within the private university may stipulate additional admission requirements which might encompass interviews, specific preparatory coursework, or pre-assessment tasks. From the experts' point of view, these regulations are not transparent.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 7 to be **partially fulfilled.**

The doctoral regulations outline the process for acceptance into the degree programme, which is primarily managed by the Doctoral Affairs Committee. Whereas the responsibility for reviewing and deciding on acceptance is clearly assigned, the specific criteria for this review and decision are not explicitly defined in the doctoral regulations. The information presented in the guidelines for implementation does not appear to be fully integrated into the official doctoral regulations or at least is not referenced there. This leads to a discrepancy in the available information, affecting the clarity of the admission process.

Therefore, the experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 8 to be **partially fulfilled.**

Procedures for the recognition of formally, non-formally, and informally acquired competencies are outlined. This includes the recognition of coursework and examinations from recognised higher education institutions. Non-formal institutional examinations and informal competencies can also be credited, provided they meet specific criteria and are justified and recognised by the head of the degree programme. According to the application document and information during the site visit, these procedures are transparent for all involved.

The experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 9 to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

- It is strongly recommended to eliminate discrepancies between the application document, the doctoral regulations, and the module handbook (including the guidelines for implementation) and to ensure clarity, in particular in the documents that will be available and important for the future students. The detailed recommendations to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 3, 5, 7 and 9 should be taken into account.
- Requirement of GRE scores for the doctoral programme seems ambitious given the timelines for the beginning of the programme and in relation to other established institutions in the region. This requirement could be reconsidered.
- Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that the complete and binding admission procedure be published in detail on the private university's website and that this

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

information is actively communicated to potential applicants through information materials.

(5) Staff

The number of professors involved in the doctoral programme as supervisors appears to be appropriate and sufficient. 12 permanent professors will be employed at DPU by October 2025 and will be available as supervisors for the doctoral thesis projects, covering the range of disciplines and scientific aspects of the planned programme, in particular regarding the core themes prioritised at this early stage of the implementation of the programme (medical imaging, AI, biosensors, and data science). 3 supervisors are employed less than 20 hours per week. DPU plans to establish further interdisciplinary research to broaden the perspective with respect to precision and personalised medicine. In addition, 38 permanent professors from the university clinics are listed as possible co-supervisors, ensuring the integration of a clinical perspective in the doctoral thesis supervision. The designated supervisors are appropriately qualified (habilitated or equivalent qualification) and have – for the most part – experience in supervising doctoral thesis. However, this experience is unevenly distributed, with 8 of the 15 having 6 or less previous or current supervisions. The active involvement of the intended supervisors in research and development activities has been convincingly demonstrated by strong h-indices, appropriate publication lists, and successful third-party funding. The private university offers a dedicated seminar series on good doctoral supervision practices and supervision guidelines.

The experts consider the criteria § 18 para. 5 subpara. 1 to 3 to be **fulfilled.**

Recommendations:

- It is strongly recommended for DPU to realise the planned extension in their research programme by integrating new interdisciplinary themes, thereby increasing the number of permanent professors and expanding the thematic scope of their expertise to further broaden the perspective of the envisioned doctoral programme.
- Furthermore, it is strongly recommended to ensure that supervisors with less experience receive support from the more experienced supervisors and take part in the personnel development measures for supervisors offered by DPU.
- The experts recommend resolving the inconsistencies between the supervision guidelines and the doctoral regulations.

(6) Funding

The costs calculations for a period of six years are plausible. The core costs will be covered from already available funds of the existing bachelor and master programme in human medicine as well as third-party funding and tuition fees. From the bachelor and master funds, the applicant institution is planning to finance 5 doctoral students, the research infrastructure and most of the teaching. Tuition fees will be used to finance guest lecturers. Third-party funding is considered to finance 10 additional doctoral students per year. The number of students will be reduced in case that only insufficient third-party funding is available in the future.

The experts consider the criterion § 18 para. 6 to be **fulfilled.**

However, in case that the duration of the curriculum would be extended (cf. condition to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4), the criterion would only be partially fulfilled, since the financial plan assumes funding for students for a duration of studies of three years.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

Despite the identified shortcomings, the experts recommend that the Board of AQ Austria accredits the doctoral degree programme 'Precision and Personalized Medicine' under the following **conditions**, as the shortcomings can be remedied and primarily concern regulations and definitions such as the description of the profile and the learning outcomes as well as the regulations concerning the admission requirements and procedure:

1. Criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 1: Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the profile and intended learning outcomes comply with the requirements of the aspired professional fields of activities (in the case of a doctoral programme, this is primarily preparation for an academic career) and with level 8 of the National Qualification Framework and that they are defined consistently in the relevant documents (application document, guidelines for implementation, doctoral regulation, Diploma Supplement).
2. Criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 2: Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the name of the degree programme and the academic degree correspond to the degree programme's profile.
3. Criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 3: Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the learning outcomes can be achieved by completing the curricular courses (without completing extracurricular courses for which no ECTS are provided). This can be demonstrated by simply changing the profile and learning outcomes of the doctoral programme in line with the existing curriculum.
4. Criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4: Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the workload is conceived to ensure that the intended learning outcomes, especially preparing a doctoral thesis, can be achieved within the stipulated duration of studies. This could be demonstrated, for example, by one of the following two options:
    a. Adaptation of the structure of the programme, in particular with respect to the timing and content of the research proposal, and of the requirements for the dissertation with respect to the number of publications,
    b. Extension of the standard duration of the programme to four years while keeping the current structure and requirements.
5. Criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 6: Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the Diploma Supplement aligns with the actual profile and learning outcomes and that the programme requirements are specific, clear, and precisely defined. If the duration of the curriculum is extended (cf. condition to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4), before the start of the doctoral programme, additional proof must be provided that the Diploma Supplement has been adjusted in accordance with the changed duration of studies.
6. Criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 7: Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the admission requirements to the degree programme are clearly defined. Therefore, the institution has to provide evidence that it has been determined who is responsible for deciding on the additional training in case of a non-research Master's degree and that additional requirements such as interviews, specific preparatory coursework, or pre-assessment tasks are determined clearly from the outset.
7. Criterion § 18 para. 4 subpara. 8: Before the start of the doctoral programme, proof must be provided that the criteria for acceptance as a student are clearly defined, either by incorporating the additional details of the admission process from the guidelines for implementation into the doctoral regulations or by referencing the additional details of the admission process in the doctoral regulations.

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

8. Criterion § 18 para. 6: In case that the duration of the curriculum would be extended (cf. condition to § 18 para. 4 subpara. 4), before the start of the degree programme, proof must be provided that funding for the changed duration of studies is secured.

General recommendation:

With regard to the overall quality of the documents and the observed discrepancies, the experts strongly recommend establishing a dedicated quality assurance office with specialised staff in order to further solidify the importance and role of quality assurance for the degree programme.

5 Viewed documents

- Application for accreditation of the doctoral programme Precision and Personalized Medicine, conducted in Wiener Neustadt by the Danube Private University GmbH, received on 13.12.2024 in the version of 21.03.2025
- Subsequent documents submitted after the site visit, received on 02.06.2025 and 09.06.2025

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, 1190 Wien, Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
T +43 664 78042262 | +43 677 61495429, office@aq.ac.at, www.aq.ac.at

DANUBE PRIVATE UNIVERSITY
Austria

To the Board of the
Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria
AQ Austria
Franz-Klein-Gasse 5
AT-1190 Vienna
Austria

18th July 2025

"Comments from the applicant institution regarding the experts' report dated 12th July 2025, concerning the application for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in 'Precision and Personalized Medicine.'"

Distinguished Members of AQ Austria and Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for sending us the expert report dated 12th July 2025, along with the associated **accreditation recommendation** for the DPU's planned PhD program "Precision and Personalized Medicine."

We are very pleased that the experts expressed appreciation for DPU's research environment, research projects, international collaborations and scientific staff. DPU sees this as a recognition of its commitment to becoming a leading research institution that conducts top-level international research. In accordance with the experts, DPU views the accreditation of the PhD program as a logical step to further advance DPU's research development.

DPU also greatly values the reviewers' factual and constructive feedback, as well as the many useful additional recommendations for improving and further developing the PhD program in the future.

With regard to the criterion "Degree Program and Degree Program Management", the experts outlined a number of conditions which, in their view, must be fulfilled in connection with the accreditation. DPU is in agreement with the proposed conditions and responds to these as follows:

- Regarding conditions 1, 2, and 3: The profile and intended learning outcomes will be adjusted to align with the curriculum, the academic degree (resp. NQR VIII) and the name of the program. All relevant documents will be made consistent. DPU fully understands the experts' reasoning and these conditions can be fulfilled before the start of the program.

- Regarding Condition 4: DPU understands the reviewers' concerns and chooses to proceed with the proposed *option a.* to address the issue. Accordingly, an extension of the study duration is not planned; instead, the structure of the program will be adapted. This condition can also be fulfilled before the program begins.
- Condition 5 (diploma supplement) is closely related to Conditions 1, 2, and 3 and can likewise be fulfilled before the start of the program.
- Regarding Conditions 6 and 7 (admission requirements and procedures): DPU fully understands the experts' reasoning, and these conditions, will also be met prior to program commencement.

Regarding §18(6) "Funding", DPU would like to clarify that the PhD program has a duration of three years and extensions will not be routinely granted. Therefore, no changes to the financial plan are necessary, and the experts' assessment of "fulfilled" remains valid.

DPU would like to thank AQ Austria, especially for the streamlined and effective procedure. The materials were reviewed very thoroughly by both the procedure management and the expert group. All members of DPU involved in the evaluation process greatly appreciated the constructive atmosphere and gained valuable inspiration for the continued development of the PhD program. A letter of appreciation regarding the process, written by Prof. Hossam Haick, is attached as **Appendix 1**.

We would be delighted if the AQ Austria Board were to follow the experts' recommendation and accredit the PhD program "Precision and Personalized Medicine."

Kind regards,

June 19, 2025

Director Robert Wagner
Danube Private University (DPU)
Steiner Landstraße 124
3500 Krems-Stein
ÖSTERREICH / AUSTRIA

Subject: Commendation of the Accreditation Process for the Doctoral Programme in "*Precision and Personalized Medicine*"

Dear Director Wagner,

I am writing to express my profound appreciation for the outstanding quality, professionalism, and integrity of the accreditation process conducted by AQ Austria for the doctoral programme *"Precision and Personalized Medicine"* at Danube Private University GmbH.

This has been a thorough and well-organized process, marked by carefully staged submission phases, insightful pre-discussions with AQ Austria representatives under the guidance of , and meticulous overall preparation. The process culminated in the highly engaging site visit on May 22, 2025 at the campus in Wiener Neustadt and was further enhanced by the constructive and insightful post-meeting interactions that followed, particularly while addressing the reviewers' comments and suggestions. Throughout, it was clear that AQ Austria maintained the highest standards of quality assurance, ensuring a transparent, respectful, and critically informed dialogue that genuinely supported institutional improvement and academic excellence. Having experienced processes from both perspectives – serving as an evaluator and undergoing evaluation – across various countries and academic systems, I have developed a deep appreciation for what constitutes an effective accreditation process. Without doubt, this one stands out as a model of excellence.

The review panel assembled for this process was exceptional, bringing together the combined expertise of Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Daniel Baumgarten in Biomedical Engineering, Prof. Dr.-Ing. habil. Andreas Maier in Medical Imaging and Pattern Recognition, PD Dr. med. Linus Angenendt in Precision Oncology and Digital Medicine, and Mr. Damon Mohebbi, MSc, who contributed a valuable student perspective in digital health. Together, their insights ensured a holistic, interdisciplinary, and future-oriented assessment. What truly distinguished their contribution was their deep and systematic examination of all dimensions of the programme. They delved into the curriculum structure, learning outcomes, admission criteria, supervisory model, faculty qualifications, and the scientific depth of the research focus. They assessed the integration of digital tools and AI in medical education, the relevance of proposed methodologies to clinical and translational settings, and the mechanisms for student support and international collaboration. Equally impressive was their ability to uncover subtle inconsistencies and potential misalignments – whether in the phrasing of learning objectives, the coherence between course content and programme goals, or the scalability of planned infrastructure – details that are often overlooked, even by internal teams. Their feedback drew our immediate attention and demonstrated an unusually high level of precision and commitment to academic excellence.

Special thanks go to , whose exemplary coordination and skillful moderation were truly commendable. From the very beginning, it was evident that she had developed a deep and comprehensive understanding of every aspect of the programme – both major and minor. Her familiarity with the submission materials, strategic context, academic structure, and even the smallest procedural details allowed her to steer the process with remarkable clarity and confidence. Her ability to anticipate questions, connect inputs across different elements, and guide the discussion with both precision and warmth greatly contributed to the productive, focused, and respectful atmosphere we experienced throughout the evaluation.

I bring to this reflection over two decades of active engagement in academic and strategic advisory roles – serving with distinguished bodies such as the European Commission, the Rhodes Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, the Council for Higher Education in Israel, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Cornell-Technion Initiative in New York. For many years, I have been a dedicated member of the Council for Higher Education in Israel, where I have contributed to the evaluation and accreditation of diverse academic programmes across universities and colleges nationwide. These evaluations have spanned a wide array of disciplines, including natural sciences, engineering, medicine, and beyond, providing me with deep insight into institutional assessment, curriculum development, and international academic standards. Of particular relevance, between 2020 and 2022, in my capacity as Dean of Undergraduate Studies at the Technion, overseeing more than 10,000 students and over 2,000 faculty members, I led the development of the *"Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative in Undergraduate Studies"*. This far-reaching initiative brought together 12 expert committees and 83 representatives from both academia and industry to shape a forward-thinking roadmap for transforming teaching, learning, and related research activities in higher education. In 2024, this initiative was officially adopted by the Council for Higher Education in Israel under the national framework titled "Academica 365", which is now being implemented across all Israeli universities and colleges, each receiving significant funding to execute core components of the plan.

With all of this in mind, I can state unequivocally that the AQ Austria process serves as a gold standard in academic accreditation – demonstrating how a rigorous and well-orchestrated process can both ensure quality and inspire progress.

With my highest respect and appreciation,

Prof. Hossam Haick
Dean of the School of Undergradute Studies
The F.M.W Academic Chair