



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria

AQ Austria

The Agency

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Establishment of the Agency

In 2012, the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) was established on the basis of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG), by which the three former Austrian quality assurance agencies were merged into one independent agency for the entire Austrian higher education system.

The Agency's Activities

As national quality assurance agency, AQ Austria offers a wide range of activities, including accreditation, quality audit, evaluation, and consulting services for higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as analyses and studies on topics relating to higher education development.

International Orientation

AQ Austria has a strong international focus, which is reflected in the composition of the Board as well as in the Agency's application of international good practice in all its procedures.

Independence and Expertise

AQ Austria's structure guarantees independence and decision making solely based on national and international expertise while involving stakeholders as well. The decision-making body is the **Board** alone. It is composed of independent experts, almost half of which are foreign members. All relevant stakeholder groups are represented in the **General Meeting**, whose main task is to nominate ten of the 14 members of the Board. The **Governing Committee** consists of five members, among them also stakeholder representatives. It has an advisory function. The **Appeals Committee** deals with and decides on appeals.

AQ Austria has twenty years of international experience and expertise in quality assurance and quality improvement in higher education. AQ Austria performs all of its activities across the European Higher Education Area.

International Recognition

- Full Member of ENQA, CEENQA, INQAAHE, EURASHE, affiliate of EUA
- listed on EQAR
- accredited by the Accreditation Council in Germany

AQ Austria's principles

- HEIs bear the main responsibility for the quality of their activities and for quality assurance (QA)
- QA procedures support a higher education institution's quality enhancement
- reviewers are "critical friends"
- international good practice standards (ESG, fteval, DeGEval) serve as a model for all procedures
- co-operation with HEIs and other interested parties serves as basis for the development of procedural rules and standards or criteria.

Procedures conducted by AQ Austria

Accreditations

On the basis of the HS-QSG, AQ Austria is the competent body for carrying out accreditation procedures in Austria. Private universities and universities of applied sciences require accreditation as a prerequisite for state recognition. In accrediting a higher education institution, AQ Austria certifies that they have met the prerequisites for accreditation.

Quality Audits

An audit confirms that a higher education institution established its quality assurance system pursuant to statutory provisions and supports the higher education institution in improving their internal quality assurance system.

System accreditation in Germany

A system accreditation assesses the internal quality assurance system of a higher education institution in the field of degree programmes and teaching with regard to their appropriateness for achieving the qualification objectives and for ensuring high quality of the degree programmes.

International Accreditation

In accrediting degree programmes abroad, AQ Austria certifies that they comply with the main principles and tools of the EHEA.

Fields of activity

- statutory accreditation in Austria (programme and institutional accreditation) – university of applied sciences sector, private universities sector
- quality audit in Austria and abroad
- other peer review procedures
- consultancy services on the implementation of quality management instruments and systems
- studies and system analyses
- evaluation of cross-border degree programmes
- international activities focussing on German-speaking countries and South-Eastern Europe
- system accreditation in Germany
- voluntary accreditation abroad

International Recognition

AQ Austria is in compliance with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (ESG)* and internationally recognized.

AQ Austria is full member of ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), a network of 41 quality assurance agencies from 25 European countries and is listed on EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register).

In 2013, the Accreditation Council decided on AQ Austria's certification for conducting system and programme accreditation in Germany.

As of 2013, AQ Austria was authorised for conducting accreditation procedures in Kazakhstan.

AQ Austria is a member of the *Central and Eastern European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CEENQA)*, as well as of the *International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)*. AQ Austria plays a leading role in the *Quality Audit Network (QAN)*, is an associate member in the *European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)* and is an affiliate of the *European University Association (EUA)*.



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