



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria

Internationalisation strategy of AQ Austria

Vienna, June 2013



1. Background

Quality assurance in higher education is defined by international standards and cooperation. The Bologna Process provides a framework for the international orientation of quality assurance agencies and their processes.

International engagement is a core claim of AQ Austria, which is put into practise at different levels and through the use of different measures. The organisational structure of AQ Austria, the involvement of international expertise in its decision-making bodies and many years of international experience of its predecessor institutions back up this claim.

2. Goals

AQ Austria, through its international operations, pursues the following strategic objectives:

- AQ Austria supports the recognition of Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and private universities in the field of European higher education.
- As a national agency, AQ Austria offers Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and private universities quality assurance processes in accordance with high international standards.
- The expertise of AQ Austria contributes to the development of quality assurance processes and standards at an international level. At the same time the AQ Austria draws on the experience of other agencies for its own work.

3. Geographic Focus

AQ Austria draws on rich experience of working with different countries and regions. Cooperation with higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies should be developed and expanded in compliance with the objectives of AQ Austria. The focus countries and regions are Austria's neighbouring countries and Central and Eastern Europe. Cooperation with Asian countries will be developed.

4. International recognition and memberships

AQ Austria is a full member of various [international networks](#) of quality assurance agencies (ENQA, CEENQA, ECA, INQAAHE, Quality Audit Network). These memberships are embraced actively, as they serve as a platform for the exchange of experience and support the participation in international initiatives and projects.

A prerequisite for the continuation of membership in ENQA and for inclusion in the European register EQAR is an external evaluation in which AQ Austria proves its fulfillment of the ESG. This evaluation will be performed at the beginning of 2014 by ENQA.

AQ Austria strives to carry out [quality assurance processes in selected countries](#) according to the respective national regulations. It is decided on an individual basis whether AQ Austria should apply for recognition as a quality assurance agency in countries that open their higher education systems to foreign accreditation (EQAR).

5. Strategic alliances and partnerships



AQ Austria seeks [strategic partnerships with international organisations](#) (e.g. in the field of arts) and [quality assurance agencies](#) in other countries. These collaborations serve to strengthen the international recognition of quality assurance processes and to better respond to the (discipline) specific requirements of higher education institutions.

In the context of strategic partnerships, quality assurance processes should be developed jointly and carried out in Austrian higher education institutions as well as higher education institutions abroad.

Partnerships with other quality assurance agencies serve the exchange of experience as well as mutual learning. As part of human resource development, employees of AQ Austria as well as the partner agency should be given the opportunity to learn first hand about the operation of the other agency.

AQ Austria [collaborates with european higher education conferences \(EUA, EURASHE\), student organisations \(ESU\)](#) and other international organisations in the field of higher education. Cooperation encompasses for example European project consortia, events or nomination of experts.

6. Quality assurance processes in other countries

AQ Austria offers to carry out quality assurance processes at higher education institutions in other countries. This includes [the accreditation of study programmes and the certification of quality management systems according to European benchmarks](#). These accreditation processes can be carried out either with the official recognition of AQ Austria as quality assurance agency in the respective countries as well as without such official recognition.

The processes are based on AQ Austria's predetermined procedural rules and standards. They have no sovereign character, and their related decisions have no direct legal claims within the Austrian higher education system.

Apart from accreditation and certification process, AQ Austria offers [consulting services](#) on topics of quality assurance and quality management in higher education . These services are designed pursuant to the requirements and needs of the respective higher education institution. Such consulting services can also serve to prepare a higher education institution for an accreditation or certification by another quality assurance agency (e.g. preparation of a system accreditation).

[Resolution of the Board of AQ Austria on 14 June 2013.](#)