

Recommendation on the Admission with Foreign Secondary School Leaving Certificates (*Zulassungsempfehlung ausländische Reifezeugnisse*)

The “Working Group on Recognition”, composed by representatives of the universities, Universities Austria (uniko), the Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH), and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, has adopted the following recommendation:

1. General

In the course of the ascertainment of the general university entrance qualification (64 para. 1 subpara. 3 of the Universities Act 2002 – UG, BGBl. I No. 120/2002, as amended), the following distinction shall be made:

1.1. Nostrification

A foreign secondary school leaving certificate which has got a nostrification by the Federal Ministry for Education is fitted, in terms of contents of education, with all effects which are linked with secondary school leaving certificates of the type which is determined in the official notification of the nostrification. If needed, additional examinations according to the University Entrance Qualification Decree – UBVO 1998, BGBl. II No. 44/1998, as amended, shall be demanded.

1.2. “Convention certificate“

A certificate from a country which has concluded a bilateral agreement with Austria on the equivalence of secondary school leaving certificates gives proof of the general university entrance qualification without further requirements, provided that it belongs, according to the system of the country of origin, to the kind of certificates which give access to higher education.

A certificate from a country which is a Contracting Party to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (“Lisbon Recognition Convention”), BGBl. III No. 71/1999, gives proof of the general university entrance qualification, provided that it belongs, according to the system of the country of origin, to the kind of certificates which give access to higher education. In the case of substantial differences to the Austrian general admission requirements, the receiving university is allowed to demand the pass of additional examinations. The criteria for the

assumption of substantial differences, however, should be regarded in a restrictive way, and additional requirements should be restricted to the necessary extent. See the „Lissabon-Empfehlung Wesentliche Unterschiede“.

If needed, additional examinations according to the UBVO 1998 shall be demanded in all cases.

1.3. Other certificate

A certificate to which nostrification and “convention certificate” do not apply gives proof of the general university entrance qualification without further requirements, provided that it belongs, according to the system of the country of origin, to the kind of certificates which give access to higher education, and that it is, due to the decision of the rectorate of the receiving university, equivalent to an Austrian secondary school leaving certificate.

Otherwise the respective additional examinations have to be demanded. In this case the requirements are not restricted to substantial differences. If needed, additional examinations according to the UBVO 1998 shall be demanded in all cases.

Taking into account the present law, the following crucial points and deliberations are of particular importance. Because of the existing connections, the questions regarding the review of the knowledge of German language are mentioned likewise.

2. Adequate prescription of additional examinations

2.1. Formal review

The formal review of the requirements mentioned under 1 above shall be executed by the responsible office of the rectorate (registration office, decanate of studies, or others).

The formal review consists especially of

- check of completeness and plausibility of prior educational qualifications
- assignment of a certificate to the categories nostrification, “convention certificate” (together with sub-groups) or other certificate
- estimation in meaning of the database ANABIN and other sources of information
- ascertainment of those subjects which are prescribed in the framework of the university entrance qualification exam with regard to the foreseen study programme
- maintenance of a pool of examiners for additional examinations or, respectively, experts for the review of the knowledge of German language, possibly by inter-university coordination or in cooperation with the school authorities.

In case that other universities are involved in a given study programme, the clarification of admission requirements shall be subject to coordination between the rectorates concerned.

In case that proof of the special university entrance qualification can be shown, and that the secondary school leaving certificate in question does not have a significant conspicuousness, there can, as a rule, be assumed that the general university entrance qualification does exist in this case.

2.2. Material review

The material questions of equivalence and differences shall, if needed, be executed by experts of the university, at which those authorities which are responsible for the coordination of the study programme concerned or respectively or of all study programmes at a given faculty shall offer their assistance.

With regard to the question whether additional examinations should be prescribed the database ANABIN can be used as an important assistance for the decision-making process. In case that ANABIN prescribes, for the purpose of the fulfilment of the necessary equivalence, a study activity on post-secondary level of one year's duration, it is recommended to demand from the applicant the pass of the subject German (unless there exist respective proofs of evidence) and a second subject. In case that these recommendations prescribe, for the purpose of the fulfilment of the necessary equivalence, a study activity on post-secondary level of two years' duration, it is recommended to demand from the applicant the pass of the subject German (unless there exist respective proofs of evidence) and three other subjects. In case that the student can prove pass of semesters within a study activity on post-secondary level he prescriptions should be reduced.

The decision which additional examinations will possibly be prescribed shall be taken in line with the subjects in the framework of the university entrance qualification exam (see Annexe 1 to the former University Entrance Examinations Decree – *Studienberechtigungsverordnung* – StudBerVO, BGBl. No. 439/1986, as amended). In that a certain orientation towards the foreseen study programme makes sense.

Where there is offered a university preparation programme, the required additional examinations should be taken in the framework of the university preparation programme, in all other cases before the competent experts of the receiving university or, if needed, of other universities or before the school authorities (especially the Educational Directorates).

The review of the special university entrance qualification should, in order to avoid problems in the admission procedure later on, be done already before the prescription of the additional examinations or, respectively, if need be, before the assignment to the respective university preparation programme, but not anymore after the applicant has passed these requirements.

In the case of appeals, the applicants should, if additional examinations have been demanded because of bad marks in the relevant subjects in the secondary school leaving certificate, and no study at a foreign university has taken place, be given the possibility to

get a review of their knowledge in the single subjects by examiners who are members of the given university.

3. Adequate review of the knowledge of German language

3.1. Ex officio review:

Where this would be possible on the basis of the single case, the rectorate should review the knowledge of German language ex officio and directly.

3.2. Recognized pieces of evidence:

If “ex officio review” does not apply, the knowledge of German language can be proved directly, or acquired before starting the degree programme, e.g. in the framework of the university preparation programme. As a rule, the following certificates will be accepted as a proof of sufficient knowledge of German language:

- German as a subject in the secondary school leaving examination
- additional examination in German in the university preparation programme
- certificate on the university language examination in German (on the basis of the former art. 28 of the General Act on Studies in Higher Education – AHStG, BGBl. No. 177/1966, as amended)
- “Intermediate Level” of the Austrian Language Diploma German
- “Economical Language German” of the Austrian Language Diploma German
- “TestDaF” (Test German as a Foreign Language, German as a Foreign Language) with at least level TDN 4 in all part examinations
- certificates on the der levels “Advanced 3” or “Perfection” of the Vienna International University Courses
- “Central Intermediate Examination” and “Minor German Language Diploma” of the Goethe Institute
- “Second Level” of the German Language Diploma of the Kultusministerkonferenz der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.

In other cases (e.g. German as a part of the subject list, but not as a subject in the secondary school leaving examination) it is up to the receiving university to recognize the pieces of evidence on a case-by-case basis, possibly after having sought expert opinions.

4. Procedural questions

4.1. Duration of procedure:

The duration up to the presentation of the complete documentation varies because of the different standards and formalities and, as a consequence of that, the administrative efforts.

There should be the utmost effort in order to decide a major part of the admission applications in the first instance.

4.2. Particular cases:

After an applicant has passed at least two years of a study programme in another country than that in which he or she has been acquired the secondary school leaving certificate, he or she should, in application of art. 60 para. 3 UG, in the case of changing to Austria be exempted from the proof of the special university entrance qualification, if this would cause unreasonable efforts; possibly there should as a compensation be demanded a proof on the right to pursue the studies at the prior university.

Assistant professors who are employed at the receiving university on a contractual basis there could, in application of art. 60 para. 3 UG, in the case of changing to Austria be exempted from the proof of the special university entrance qualification.

Applicants for asylum could, in application of art. 60 para. 3 UG, in the case of changing to Austria be exempted from the legalization of the documents, provided that their genuineness seems plausible.

In the case of Chinese applicants it is recommended to use the Academic Examination Office (*Akademische Prüfstelle, APS*) in Peking as an experts' authority. See the *Zulassungsempfehlung China* [[Link: 2.4.13.7E](#)]

In the case of a change between two branches of study which have to be understood merely as specialisations within the same field of study, a further proof of the special university entrance qualification does not seem necessary.