

Position Paper "Alternative Qualifications"

Introduction/Preamble

Since 2014, the UAS Board has incorporated the cross-cutting issue "Gender & Diversity" in their work programme. The Human Resources Committee in Teaching and Research used this as an opportunity to establish the position of the UAS Board concerning transparency and the improvement of the situation in writing, thus supporting the evaluation through additional questions in individual cases.

One objective of the Gender and Diversity Commitment of the St. Pölten UAS is to enable different and atypical career paths and to arrange for a well-rounded work-family balance.¹

Most recently, the *Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research* has placed greater emphasis on a "social dimension" when it comes to students which should be characterised by heterogeneity and diversity, thus publishing the "National strategy on the social dimension of higher education". R. Mitterlehner writes in the introduction "*The social dimension complements the claim to excellence which characterises academic life. Heterogeneity and diversity contribute to further quality enhancement in teaching, ultimately benefiting all students and teachers.*"²

All staff members of the St. Pölten UAS render important services to the institution and are supported and encouraged in their work and career. Staff members are networked on a regional, nationwide and international level and make an essential contribution to the excellence of the St. Pölten UAS and the position of the city and region worldwide through their achievements in teaching and research (excerpt from the UAS strategy 2017).

This position paper is intended to assist decision-making in the evaluation or advancement of staff members in their assessment regarding alternative qualifications or informally/non-formally required knowledge.³

Alternative Qualifications for Equal Opportunities in Education and Employment

The working environment is becoming more diverse in its requirements which is why the St. Pölten UAS needs more teachers and researcher who have experienced these altered requirements themselves. Due to this reason, divergent academic experiences should be recognised.

In Austria, professional qualifications are measured predominantly on the basis of legally regulated certificates. Further education and training events as well as workplace learning, leisure activities or

¹ St. Pölten UAS, Gender and Diversity Commitment, https://www.fhstp.ac.at/de/mediathek/pdfs/infoblaetter/satzung_teil_3_gleichstellung_frauenforderung_2018.pdf

² Mitterlehner, Reinhold, in BMWFW, Nationale Strategie zur sozialen Dimension der Hochschulbildung. Für einen integrativeren Zugang und eine breitere Teilhabe. Februar 2017. Wien. Abrufbar unter: <http://exploredoc.com/doc/11991103/nationale-strategie-zur-sozialen-dimension-in-der>

³ Informal Learning

Learning objectives, learning period or learning assistance are not organised or structured. This type of learning takes place in daily life, the workplace, within a family setting or during leisure time.

Non-Formal Learning

"Partially structured learning", activities which are not explicitly referred to as learning (regarding objectives, period and assistance) but contain a strong „learning element“.

volunteer work are often far less relevant. The skills and abilities gained in these educational measures, however, often fulfil the requirement profiles for different occupations and tasks.⁴ Due to the heterogeneous occupational areas of the St. Pölten UAS in which we instruct and work, it is necessary to view staff members in the context of their different career paths. This is why the UAS Board advocates for equal opportunities in education and occupation by acknowledging the diversity of career and life experiences. Alternative qualifications can be the following (this is a non-exhaustive list):

Scientific Skills in Research and Teaching, Academic Age

Digression: Academic Age

Your academic age describes the years of active research and not your biological age. As an evaluation basis for scientific excellence, the use of the academic age should help compensate gaps in the CV by factoring in parental leaves, the return to the academic life or the actual academic experience for people who started their professional life later.

Example: 16 years have passed since the beginning of a person's doctorate in which 13 scientific papers were published. The person worked part-time for nine of these 16 years and was on parental leave for 20 months. The academic age is thus not 16 years but ten. Hence, 13 papers were published in ten years.

The starting points of the calculation of the academic age may vary depending on the field of work and position and it does not always have to start with the doctorate.

- Including the academic age in the evaluation of the publishing activity in the context of a person's biography:
 - late start of study programme, e.g. due to a second education path
 - career interruption due to e.g. child care, family members in need of care, or personal health reasons
 - full-time vs. part-time
 - several fixed-term, project-related activities, possibly with interruptions
 - voluntary activities and working abroad, especially when linked to further education and training
 - career breaks due to educational reasons

Participation and Commitment to the St. Pölten UAS

- Active participation in the further development of the UAS and committee work, for example:
 - participating in the audit, EFQM, annex to the UAS building or the like
 - programme development of new courses and study programmes
 - knowledge transfer events (e.g. research chill-out)
 - participation in committees (UAS Board, working groups, other committees)

⁴ BMFJ. <https://www.bmfj.gv.at/jugend/beschaefigung-bildung/informelles-und-non-formales-lernen.html> access date 1.6.2017

- members of the general administrative staff with ongoing commitment in teaching
- teaching abroad (participations)

Link to Society (Projects, Economy)

- Participation in public discourse and exchange with society, for example:
 - interviews concerning current topics on the radio, TV or in newspapers
 - evaluation activities (reviews) for ministries, scientific journals and the like
 - jury activities at branch-specific award ceremonies
 - collaboration/participation in national and international professional associations
 - representation of the UAS/the department/the study programme as well as the contribution of professional knowledge at conferences, meetings and workshops, etc.
 - participation/collaboration/implementation of university events for children and seniors, Long Night of Research, project previews and the like
 - information and counselling of pupils during school visits and of students at job fairs

Alternatively: Relevant Experiences and Skills Concerning the Project:

- professional activities prior to their occupation at the St. Pölten UAS which are not related to the higher education sector, science or teaching, or newcomers from sectors such as the industry, economy, social care and healthcare services, etc.
- long-term professional stays abroad; (international) internships which are an increasingly more common preliminary stage to employment
- multilingual communication competence

In the spirit of encouraging diversity at the St. Pölten UAS, this position paper supports the issue and points the way to broaden horizons. The paper tries to avoid limiting the scope with rigid checklists. In terms of implementation, namely the specific individual assessment, this means that more time has to be devoted to the auditing of documents and hearings.

Human Resources Committee, June 2017

Appendix - Sources and Additional Links

AQ Austria, Anerkennung und Anrechnung non-formal und informell erworbener Kompetenzen
<https://www.aq.ac.at/de/veranstaltungen/dokumente-veranstaltungen/AQ-Empfehlungen-Anerkennung--und-Anrechnung-2016.pdf?m=1486476596> Dezember 2016. Wien.

BMFJ. <https://www.bmfj.gv.at/jugend/beschaeftigung-bildung/informelles-und-non-formales-lernen.html> Abrufdatum 1.6.2017. Wien.

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NQR-Koordinierungsstelle in Österreich (NKS), Handbuch für die Zuordnung von Qualifikationen zum Nationalen Qualifikationsrahmen (NQR)
https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/res/file/HandbuchNQR_Einzelseiten.pdf November 2016. Wien

Republik Österreich, LLL 2020. Strategie zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen in Österreich
https://www.bmb.gv.at/ministerium/vp/2011/lll-arbeitspapier_ebook_gross_20916.pdf?5i830l Juli 2011. Wien.

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