

Minority Report

Minority Report – a Tentative Assessment of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences

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Key data

- established 1994
- 20 providers
- 270 degree programmes
- 34.000 students (236.000 university students; 40.300 university students in Styria)
- 80% studying economic or engineering sciences
- unemployment rate 0.4%

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Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) as agents of ...

- **Education policy** (competitors of „traditional“ universities)
- **Regional policy** (reduction of regional disparities)
- **Social policy** („flexible“ admission to higher education)
- **Economic policy** (close contact and cooperation with firms)

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What is the main difference between „traditional“ universities and UAS?

NOT: theory vs praxis

 generalisation vs specialisation

 input- vs output-orientation

 length of study

 degree of freedom for students

BUT: concreteness of occupational fields and images

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The central question:

How can the academic staff bring into focus the „right“ vocational fields, i.e. fields that the labour market needs?

→ **close and many-sided collaboration between UAS and firms.**

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Invention – the search for bright ideas

No „central planner“ behind the scene; nobody pretends to know everything

Dynamics of political, social, economic and cultural players

Competition of ideas

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The innovation process I

Internal feasibility checks (management, academic senate):
strategic, financial considerations ...

Independent development team: internal and external
experts designing a curriculum

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The innovation process II

Acceptance survey and assessment of requirements
(external placement of orders obligatory!)

Application for accreditation of a particular degree
programme (Fachhochschule council)

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Putting the curriculum into practice I

Teaching commitment of (at least) some external members of the development team

Coordination and integration of particular courses („you know what I am doing and I know what you are doing“)

Output-orientation and modular configuration of particular courses

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Putting the curriculum into practice II

Seminar-like organisation of courses (small groups, **using** theoretical knowledge, **but: do not disregard the costs!**)

Obligatory internship (abroad; up to 6 months)

Bachelor's/master's thesis (in many cases continuing and elaborating some topics of the internship)

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Quality assurance

Faculty meetings (semi-annual or annual meetings including lecturers and external partners)

Institutional evaluation (every 5 to 7 years)

Re-accreditation of particular degree programmes

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Problems and challenges

The „crisis“ and specialisation in higher education

The (female) young and engineering sciences

Financing R&D

Market-driven education (vocational training or cultural literacy)